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Algernon Charles Swinburne
Died April 10th 1909.

Now is no season for weeping
For our poet has gone to the land
Where the toiler attaineth to reap
The fruit of the toil of his hand
This or a quiet sleeping.

=

Master of melody, peace!
Albeit thy vespers are spoken
Our worship and love shall increase
Majestic, bejewelled, unbroken
The tide of thy song shall not cease

=

An end shall be made of our
Yet never an end of thy sway
Thou weaver of music whose web
Shall pale not nor fall in decay
Hush! no word of bereaving

—John Drinkwater

A.S.P. Woodhouse
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OF

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

London
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SELECTIONS

FROM

THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

ON THE VERGE.

HERE begins the sea that ends not till the world's end.
Where we stand,
Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond these
waves that gleam,
We should know what never man hath known, nor eye
of man hath scanned.
Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt like fume
of shrines that steam
Breaks or stays the strength of waters till they pass our
bounds of dream.
Where the waste Land's End leans westward, all the seas
it watches roll
Find their border fixed beyond them, and a worldwide
shore's control:
These whereby we stand no shore beyond us limits:
these are free.
Gazing hence, we see the water that grows iron round
the Pole,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all
the sea.

Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes; here on land
Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews that plunge and scream.
Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive strand
Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and dies: and scarce they seem
More than motes that thronged and trembled in the brief noon's breath and beam.
Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like sound of bells that toll,
Some with sighing and laughing, some with words that blessed and made us whole,
Passed, and left us, and we know not what they were, nor what were we.
Would we know, being mortal? Never breath of answering whisper stole
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness? Ere our eyes and brows be fanned
Round with airs of twilight, washed with dews from sleep's eternal stream,
Would we know sleep's guarded secret? Ere the fire consume the brand,

Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken? yet we deem
Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her starry team,
What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be not: yea, the scroll
Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of peace or doom of dole.
Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the gloom with venturous glee,
Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbour, rock nor shoal,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have life or life have death for goal?
Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor skies unroll
What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall alway be.
Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on the soul
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

THE SUNBOWS.

Spray of song that springs in April, light of love that laughs through May,
Live and die and live for ever: nought of all things far less fair
Keeps a surer life than these that seem to pass like fire away.
In the souls they live which are but all the brighter that they were;
In the hearts that kindle, thinking what delight of old was there.
Wind that shapes and lifts and shifts them bids perpetual memory play
Over dreams and in and out of deeds and thoughts which seem to wear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing flames of spray.

Dawn is wild upon the waters where we drink of dawn today:
Wide, from wave to wave rekindling in rebound through radiant air,

Flash the fires unwoven and woven again of wind that
works in play,
Working wonders more than heart may note or sight
may wellnigh dare,
Wefts of rarer light than colours rain from heaven,
though this be rare.
Arch on arch unbuilt in building, reared and ruined ray
by ray,
Breaks and brightens, laughs and lessens, even till eyes
may hardly bear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the
springing flames of spray.

Year on year sheds light and music rolled and flashed
from bay to bay
Round the summer capes of time and winter headlands
keen and bare
Whence the soul keeps watch, and bids her vassal
memory watch and pray,
If perchance the dawn may quicken, or perchance the
midnight spare.
Silence quells not music, darkness takes not sunlight
in her snare;
Shall not joys endure that perish? Yea, saith dawn,
though night say nay:
Life on life goes out, but very life enkindles everywhere
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the
springing flames of spray.

Friend, were life no more than this is, well would yet the living fare.
All aflower and all afire and all flung heavenward, who shall say
Such a flash of life were worthless? This is worth a world of care—
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing flames of spray.

IN THE WATER.

THE sea is awake, and the sound of the song of the joy
of her waking is rolled
From afar to the star that recedes, from anear to the
wastes of the wild wide shore.
Her call is a trumpet compelling us homeward: if dawn
in her east be acold,
From the sea shall we crave not her grace to rekindle
the life that it kindled before,
Her breath to requicken, her bosom to rock us, her
kisses to bless as of yore?
For the wind, with his wings half open, at pause in the
sky, neither fettered nor free,
Leans waveward and flutters the ripple to laughter: and
fain would the twain of us be
Where lightly the wave yearns forward from under the
curve of the deep dawn's dome,
And, full of the morning and fired with the pride of the
glory thereof and the glee,
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Life holds not an hour that is better to live in: the past
is a tale that is told,
The future a sun-flecked shadow, alive and asleep, with
a blessing in store.
As we give us again to the waters, the rapture of limbs
that the waters enfold
Is less than the rapture of spirit whereby, though the
burden it quits were sore,
Our souls and the bodies they wield at their will are
absorbed in the life they adore—
In the life that endures no burden, and bows not the fore-
head, and bends not the knee—
In the life everlasting of earth and of heaven, in the laws
that atone and agree,
In the measureless music of things, in the fervour of
forces that rest or that roam,
That cross and return and reissue, as I after you and as
you after me
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

For, albeit he were less than the least of them, haply the
heart of a man may be bold
To rejoice in the word of the sea as a mother's that
saith to the son she bore,
Child, was not the life in thee mine, and my spirit the
breath in thy lips from of old?

Have I let not thy weakness exult in my strength, and
thy foolishness learn of my lore?
Have I helped not or healed not thine anguish, or
made not the might of thy gladness more?
And surely his heart should answer, The light of the love
of my life is in thee.
She is fairer than earth, and the sun is not fairer, the wind
is not blither than she:
From my youth hath she shown me the joy of her bays
that I crossed, of her cliffs that I clomb,
Till now that the twain of us here, in desire of the dawn
and in trust of the sea,
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Friend, earth is a harbour of refuge for winter, a covert
whereunder to flee
When day is the vassal of night, and the strength of
the hosts of her mightier than he;
But here is the presence adored of me, here my desire
is at rest and at home.
There are cliffs to be climbed upon land, there are ways
to be trodden and ridden: but we
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

BY THE NORTH SEA.

A LAND that is lonelier than ruin;
A sea that is stranger than death;
Far fields that a rose never blew in,
Wan waste where the winds lack breath;
Waste endless and boundless and flowerless
But of marsh-blossoms fruitless as free;
Where earth lies exhausted, as powerless
To strive with the sea.

Far flickers the flight of the swallows,
Far flutters the weft of the grass
Spun dense over desolate hollows
More pale than the clouds as they pass;
Thick woven as the weft of a witch is
Round the heart of a thrall that hath sinned,
Whose youth and the wrecks of its riches
Are waifs on the wind.

The pastures are herdless and sheepless,
No pasture or shelter for herds:
The wind is relentless and sleepless,
And restless and songless the birds;

Their cries from afar fall breathless,
Their wings are as lightnings that flee;
For the land has two lords that are deathless:
Death's self, and the sea.

These twain, as a king with his fellow,
Hold converse of desolate speech:
And her waters are haggard and yellow
And crass with the scurf of the beach:
And his garments are grey as the hoary
Wan sky where the day lies dim;
And his power is to her, and his glory,
As hers unto him.

In the pride of his power she rejoices,
In her glory he glows and is glad:
In her darkness the sound of his voice is,
With his breath she dilates and is mad:
"If thou slay me, O death, and outlive me,
Yet thy love hath fulfilled me of thee."
"Shall I give thee not back if thou give me,
O sister, O sea?"

And year upon year dawns living,
And age upon age drops dead:
And his hand is not weary of giving,
And the thirst of her heart is not fed:

And the hunger that moans in her passion,
  And the rage in her hunger that roars,
As a wolf's that the winter lays lash on,
    Still calls and implores.

Her walls have no granite for girder,
  No fortalice fronting her stands:
But reefs the bloodguiltiest of murder
  Are less than the banks of her sands:
These number their slain by the thousand;
  For the ship hath no surety to be,
When the bank is abreast of her bows and
    Aflush with the sea.

No surety to stand, and no shelter
  To dawn out of darkness but one,
Out of waters that hurtle and welter
  No succour to dawn with the sun
But a rest from the wind as it passes,
  Where, hardly redeemed from the waves,
Lie thick as the blades of the grasses
    The dead in their graves.

A multitude noteless of numbers,
  As wild weeds cast on an heap:
And sounder than sleep are their slumbers,
  And softer than song is their sleep;

And sweeter than all things and stranger
The sense, if perchance it may be,
That the wind is divested of danger
And scatheless the sea.

That the roar of the banks they breasted
Is hurtless as bellowing of herds,
And the strength of his wings that invested
The wind, as the strength of a bird's;
As the sea-mew's might or the swallow's
That cry to him back if he cries,
As over the graves and their hollows
Days darken and rise.

As the souls of the dead men disburdened
And clean of the sins that they sinned,
With a lovelier than man's life guerdoned
And delight as a wave's in the wind,
And delight as the wind's in the billow,
Birds pass, and deride with their glee
The flesh that has dust for its pillow
As wrecks have the sea.

When the ways of the sun wax dimmer,
Wings flash through the dusk like beams;
As the clouds in the lit sky glimmer,
The bird in the graveyard gleams;

As the cloud at its wing's edge whitens
When the clarions of sunrise are heard,
The graves that the bird's note brightens
Grow bright for the bird.

As the waves of the numberless waters
That the wind cannot number who guides
Are the sons of the shore and the daughters
Here lulled by the chime of the tides:
And here in the press of them standing
We know not if these or if we
Live truliest, or anchored to landing
Or drifted to sea.

In the valley he named of decision
No denser were multitudes met
When the soul of the seer in her vision
Saw nations for doom of them set;
Saw darkness in dawn, and the splendour
Of judgment, the sword and the rod:
But the doom here of death is more tender
And gentler the God.

And gentler the wind from the dreary
Sea-banks by the waves overlapped,
Being weary, speaks peace to the weary
From slopes that the tide-stream hath sapped;

And sweeter than all that we call so
The seal of their slumber shall be
Till the graves that embosom them also
Be sapped of the sea.

IN THE SALT MARSHES.

I.

Miles, and miles, and miles of desolation!
Leagues on leagues on leagues without a change!
Sign or token of some eldest nation
Here would make the strange land not so strange.
Time-forgotten, yea since time's creation,
Seem these borders where the sea-birds range.

Slowly, gladly, full of peace and wonder
Grows his heart who journeys here alone.
Earth and all its thoughts of earth sink under
Deep as deep in water sinks a stone.
Hardly knows it if the rollers thunder,
Hardly whence the lonely wind is blown.

Tall the plumage of the rush-flower tosses,
Sharp and soft in many a curve and line
Gleam and glow the sea-coloured marsh-mosses,
Salt and splendid from the circling brine.
Streak on streak of glimmering seashine crosses
All the land sea-saturate as with wine.

Far, and far between, in divers orders,
Clear grey steeples cleave the low grey sky;
Fast and firm as time-unshaken warders,
Hearts made sure by faith, by hope made high.
These alone in all the wild sea-borders
Fear no blast of days and nights that die.

All the land is like as one man's face is,
Pale and troubled still with change of cares.
Doubt and death pervade her clouded spaces:
Strength and length of life and peace are theirs;
Theirs alone amid these weary places,
Seeing not how the wild world frets and fares.

Firm and fast where all is cloud that changes,
Cloud-clogged sunlight, cloud by sunlight thinned,
Stern and sweet, above the sand-hill ranges
Watch the towers and tombs of men that sinned
Once, now calm as earth whose only change is
Wind, and light, and wind, and cloud, and wind.

Out and in and out the sharp straits wander,
In and out and in the wild way strives,
Starred and paved and lined with flowers that squander
Gold as golden as the gold of hives,
Salt and moist and multiform: but yonder,
See, what sign of life or death survives?

Seen then only when the songs of olden
Harps were young whose echoes yet endure,
Hymned of Homer when his years were golden,
Known of only when the world was pure,
Here is Hades, manifest, beholden,
Surely, surely here, if aught be sure!

Where the border-line was crossed, that, sundering
Death from life, keeps weariness from rest,
None can tell, who fares here forward wondering;
None may doubt but here might end his quest.
Here life's lightning joys and woes once thundering
Sea-like round him cease like storm suppressed.

Here the wise wave-wandering steadfast-hearted
Guest of many a lord of many a land
Saw the shape or shade of years departed,
Saw the semblance risen and hard at hand,
Saw the mother long from love's reach parted,
Anticleia, like a statue stand.

Statue? nay, nor tissued image woven
Fair on hangings in his father's hall;
Nay, too fast her faith of heart was proven,
Far too firm her loveliest love of all;
Love wherethrough the loving heart was cloven,
Love that hears not when the loud Fates call.

Love that lives and stands up re-created
  Then when life has ebbed and anguish fled;
Love more strong than death or all things fated,
  Child's and mother's, lit by love and led;
Love that found what life so long awaited
  Here, when life came down among the dead.

Here, where never came alive another,
  Came her son across the sundering tide
Crossed before by many a warrior brother
  Once that warred on Ilion at his side;
Here spread forth vain hands to clasp the mother
  Dead, that sorrowing for his love's sake died.

Parted, though by narrowest of divisions,
  Clasp he might not, only might implore,
Sundered yet by bitterest of derisions,
  Son, and mother from the son she bore—
Here? But all dispeopled here of visions
  Lies, forlorn of shadows even, the shore.

All too sweet such men's Hellenic speech is,
  All too fain they lived of light to see,
Once to see the darkness of these beaches,
  Once to sing this Hades found of me
Ghostless, all its gulfs and creeks and reaches,
  Sky, and shore, and cloud, and waste, and sea.

II.

But aloft and afront of me faring
Far forward as folk in a dream
That strive, between doubting and daring,
Right on till the goal for them gleam,
Full forth till their goal on them lighten,
The harbour where fain they would be,
What headlands there darken and brighten?
What change in the sea?

What houses and woodlands that nestle
Safe inland to lee of the hill
As it slopes from the headlands that wrestle
And succumb to the strong sea's will?
Truce is not, nor respite, nor pity,
For the battle is waged not of hands
Where over the grave of a city
The ghost of it stands.

Where the wings of the sea-wind slacken,
Green lawns to the landward thrive,
Fields brighten and pine-woods blacken,
And the heat in their heart is alive;

They blossom and warble and murmur,
For the sense of their spirit is free;
But harder to shoreward and firmer
The grasp of the sea.

Like ashes the low cliffs crumble,
The banks drop down into dust,
The heights of the hills are made humble,
As a reed's is the strength of their trust:
As a city's that armies environ,
The strength of their stay is of sand:
But the grasp of the sea is as iron,
Laid hard on the land.

A land that is thirstier than ruin;
A sea that is hungrier than death;
Heaped hills that a tree never grew in;
Wide sands where the wave draws breath;
All solace is here for the spirit
That ever for ever may be
For the soul of thy son to inherit,
My mother, my sea.

O delight of the headlands and beaches!
O desire of the wind on the wold,
More glad than a man's when it reaches
That end which it sought from of old

And the palm of possession is dreary
To the sense that in search of it sinned;
But nor satisfied ever nor weary
Is ever the wind.

The delight that he takes but in living
Is more than of all things that live;
For the world that has all things for giving
Has nothing so goodly to give;
But more than delight his desire is,
For the goal where his pinions would be
Is immortal as air or as fire is,
Immense as the sea.

Though hence come the moan that he borrows
From darkness and depth of the night,
Though hence be the spring of his sorrows,
Hence too is the joy of his might;
The delight that his doom is for ever
To seek and desire and rejoice,
And the sense that eternity never
Shall silence his voice.

That satiety never may stifle
Nor weariness ever estrange
Nor time be so strong as to rifle
Nor change be so great as to change

His gift that renews in the giving,
The joy that exalts him to be
Alone of all elements living
The lord of the sea.

What is fire, that its flame should consume her?
More fierce than all fires are her waves:
What is earth, that its gulfs should entomb her?
More deep are her own than their graves.
Life shrinks from his pinions that cover
The darkness by thunders bedinned:
But she knows him, her lord and her lover,
The godhead of wind.

For a season his wings are about her,
His breath on her lips for a space;
Such rapture he wins not without her
In the width of his worldwide race.
Though the forests bow down, and the mountains
Wax dark, and the tribes of them flee,
His delight is more deep in the fountains
And springs of the sea.

There are those too of mortals that love him,
There are souls that desire and require,
Be the glories of midnight above him
Or beneath him the daysprings of fire:

And their hearts are as harps that approve him
And praise him as chords of a lyre
That were fain with their music to move him
To meet their desire.

To descend through the darkness to grace them
Till darkness were lovelier than light:
To encompass and grasp and embrace them,
Till their weakness were one with his might:
With the strength of his wings to caress them,
With the blast of his breath to set free;
With the mouths of his thunders to bless them
For sons of the sea.

For these have the toil and the guerdon
That the wind has eternally: these
Have part in the boon and the burden
Of the sleepless unsatisfied breeze,
That finds not, but seeking rejoices
That possession can work him no wrong:
And the voice at the heart of their voice is
The sense of his song.

For the wind's is their doom and their blessing;
To desire, and have always above
A possession beyond their possessing,
A love beyond reach of their love.

Green earth has her sons and her daughters,
And these have their guerdons ; but we
Are the wind's and the sun's and the water's,
Elect of the sea.

DUNWICH.

I.

Death, and change, and darkness everlasting,
Deaf, that hears not what the daystar saith,
Blind, past all remembrance and forecasting,
Dead, past memory that it once drew breath;
These, above the washing tides and wasting,
Reign, and rule this land of utter death.

Change of change, darkness of darkness, hidden,
Very death of very death, begun
When none knows,—the knowledge is forbidden—
Self-begotten, self-proceeding, one,
Born, not made—abhorred, unchained, unchidden,
Night stands here defiant of the sun.

Change of change, and death of death begotten,
Darkness born of darkness, one and three,
Ghostly godhead of a world forgotten,
Crowned with heaven, enthroned on land and sea,
Here, where earth with dead men's bones is rotten,
God of Time, thy likeness worships thee.

Lo, thy likeness of thy desolation,
Shape and figure of thy might, O Lord,
Formless form, incarnate miscreation,
Served of all things living and abhorred;
Earth herself is here thine incarnation,
Time, of all things born on earth adored.

All that worship thee are fearful of thee;
No man may not worship thee for fear:
Prayers nor curses prove not nor disprove thee,
Move nor change thee with our change of cheer:
All at last, though all abhorred thee, love thee,
God, the sceptre of whose throne is here.

Here thy throne and sceptre of thy station,
Here the palace paven for thy feet;
Here thy sign from nation unto nation
Passed as watchword for thy guards to greet,
Guards that go before thine exaltation,
Ages, clothed with bitter years and sweet.

Here, where sharp the sea-bird shrills his ditty,
Flickering flame-wise through the clear live calm,
Rose triumphal, crowning all a city,
Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm,
Built of holy hands for holy pity,
Frank and fruitful as a sheltering palm.

Church and hospice wrought in faultless fashion,
Hall and chancel bounteous and sublime,
Wide and sweet and glorious as compassion,
Filled and thrilled with force of choral chime,
Filled with spirit of prayer and thrilled with passion,
Hailed a God more merciful than Time.

Ah, less mighty, less than Time prevailing,
Shrunk, expelled, made nothing at his nod,
Less than clouds across the sea-line sailing,
Lies he, stricken by his master's rod.
"Where is man?" the cloister murmurs wailing;
Back the mute shrine thunders—"Where is God?"

Here is all the end of all his glory—
Dust, and grass, and barren silent stones.
Dead, like him, one hollow tower and hoary
Naked in the sea-wind stands and moans,
Filled and thrilled with its perpetual story;
Here, where earth is dense with dead men's bones.

Low and loud and long, a voice for ever,
Sounds the wind's clear story like a song.
Tomb from tomb the waves devouring sever,
Dust from dust as years relapse along;
Graves where men made sure to rest, and never
Lie dismantled by the seasons' wrong.

Now displaced, devoured and desecrated,
Now by Time's hands darkly disinterred,
These poor dead that sleeping here awaited
Long the archangel's re-creating word,
Closed about with roofs and walls high-gated
Till the blast of judgment should be heard,

Naked, shamed, cast out of consecration,
Corpse and coffin, yea the very graves,
Scoffed at, scattered, shaken from their station,
Spurned and scourged of wind and sea like slaves,
Desolate beyond man's desolation,
Shrink and sink into the waste of waves.

Tombs, with bare white piteous bones protruded,
Shroudless, down the loose collapsing banks,
Crumble, from their constant place detruded,
That the sea devours and gives not thanks.
Graves where hope and prayer and sorrow brooded
Gape and slide and perish, ranks on ranks.

Rows on rows and line by line they crumble,
They that thought for all time through to be.
Scarce a stone whereon a child might stumble
Breaks the grim field paced alone of me.
Earth, and man, and all their Gods wax humble
Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea.

II.

But afar on the headland exalted,
But beyond in the curl of the bay,
From the depth of his dome deep-vaulted
Our father is lord of the day.
Our father and lord that we follow,
For deathless and ageless is he;
And his robe is the whole sky's hollow,
His sandal the sea.

Where the horn of the headland is sharper,
And her green floor glitters with fire,
The sea has the sun for a harper,
The sun has the sea for a lyre.
The waves are a pavement of amber,
By the feet of the sea-winds trod,
To receive in a god's presence-chamber
Our father, the God.

Time, haggard and changeful and hoary,
Is master and God of the land:
But the air is fulfilled of the glory
That is shed from our lord's right hand.

O father of all of us ever,
  All glory be only to thee
From heaven, that is void of thee never,
    And earth, and the sea.

O Sun, whereof all is beholden,
  Behold now the shadow of this death,
This place of the sepulchres, olden
  And emptied and vain as a breath.
The bloom of the bountiful heather
  Laughs broadly beyond in thy light
As dawn, with her glories to gather,
    At darkness and night.

Though the Gods of the night lie rotten
  And their honour be taken away
And the noise of their names forgotten,
  Thou, Lord, art God of the day.
Thou art father and saviour and spirit,
  O Sun, of the soul that is free
And hath grace of thy grace to inherit
    Thine earth and thy sea.

The hills and the sands and the beaches,
  The waters adrift and afar,
The banks and the creeks and the reaches,
  How glad of thee all these are!

The flowers, overflowing, overcrowded,
Are drunk with the mad wind's mirth:
The delight of thy coming unclouded
Makes music of earth.

I, last least voice of her voices,
Give thanks that were mute in me long
To the soul in my soul that rejoices
For the song that is over my song.
Time gives what he gains for the giving
Or takes for his tribute of me;
My dreams to the wind everliving,
My song to the sea.

OFF SHORE.

When the might of the summer
Is most on the sea;
When the days overcome her
With joy but to be,
With rapture of royal enchantment, and sorcery that sets her not free,

But for hours upon hours
As a thrall she remains
Spell-bound as with flowers
And content in their chains,
And her loud steeds fret not, and lift not a lock of their deep white manes;

Then only, far under
In the depths of her hold,
Some gleam of its wonder
Man's eye may behold,
Its wild-weed forests of crimson and russet and olive and gold.

Still deeper and dimmer
And goodlier they glow
For the eyes of the swimmer
Who scans them below
As he crosses the zone of their flowerage that knows not of sunshine and snow.

Soft blossomless frondage
And foliage that gleams
As to prisoners in bondage
The light of their dreams,
The desire of a dawn unbeholden, with hope on the wings of its beams.

Not as prisoners entombed
Waxen haggard and wizen,
But consoled and illumed
In the depths of their prison
With delight of the light everlasting and vision of dawn on them risen,

From the banks and the beds
Of the waters divine
They lift up their heads
And the flowers of them shine
Through the splendour of darkness that clothes them, of water that glimmers like wine.

Bright bank over bank
Making glorious the gloom,
Soft rank upon rank,
Strange bloom after bloom,
They kindle the liquid low twilight, the dusk of the dim sea's womb.

Through the subtle and tangible
Gloom without form,
Their branches, infrangible
Ever of storm,
Spread softer their sprays than the shoots of the woodland when April is warm.

As the flight of the thunder, full
Charged with its word,
Dividing the wonderful
Depths like a bird,
Speaks wrath and delight to the heart of the night that exults to have heard,

So swiftly, though soundless
In silence's ear,
Light, winged from the boundless
Blue depths full of cheer,
Speaks joy to the heart of the waters that part not before him, but hear.

Light, perfect and visible
Godhead of God,
God indivisible,
Lifts but his rod,
And the shadows are scattered in sunder, and darkness is light at his nod.

At the touch of his wand,
At the nod of his head
From the spaces beyond
Where the dawn hath her bed,
Earth, water, and air are transfigured, and rise as one risen from the dead.

He puts forth his hand,
And the mountains are thrilled
To the heart as they stand
In his presence, fulfilled
With his glory that utters his grace upon earth, and her sorrows are stilled.

The moan of her travail
That groans for the light
Till dayspring unravel
The weft of the night,
At the sound of the strings of the music of morning, falls dumb with delight.

He gives forth his word,
And the word that he saith,
Ere well it be heard,
Strikes darkness to death ;
For the thought of his heart is the sunrise, and dawn as the sound of his breath.

And the strength of its pulses
That passion makes proud
Confounds and convulses
The depths of the cloud
Of the darkness that heaven was engirt with, divided and rent as a shroud,

As the veil of the shrine
Of the temple of old
When darkness divine
Over noonday was rolled ;
So the heart of the night by the pulse of the light is convulsed and controlled.

And the sea's heart, groaning
For glories withdrawn,
And the waves' mouths, moaning
All night for the dawn,
Are uplift as the hearts and the mouths of the singers on leaside and lawn.

And the sound of the quiring
Of all these as one,
Desired and desiring
Till dawn's will be done,
Fills full with delight of them heaven till it burns as the heart of the sun.

Till the waves too inherit
And waters take part
In the sense of the spirit
That breathes from his heart,
And are kindled with music as fire when the lips of the morning part,

With music unheard
In the light of her lips,
In the life-giving word
Of the dewfall that drips
On the grasses of earth, and the wind that enkindles the wings of the ships:

White glories of wings
As of seafaring birds
That flock from the springs
Of the sunrise in herds
With the wind for a herdsman, and hasten or halt at the change of his words:

At the watchword's change
When the wind's note shifts,
And the skies grow strange,
And the white squall drifts
Up sharp from the sea-line, vexing the sea till the low cloud lifts.

At the charge of his word
Bidding pause, bidding haste,
When the ranks are stirred
And the lines displaced,
They scatter as wild swans parting adrift on the wan green waste.

At the hush of his word
In a pause of his breath
When the waters have heard
His will that he saith,
They stand as a flock penned close in its fold for division of death.

As a flock by division
Of death to be thinned,
As the shades in a vision
Of spirits that sinned;
So glimmer their shrouds and their sheetings as clouds on the stream of the wind.

But the sun stands fast,
And the sea burns bright,
And the flight of them past
Is no more than the flight
Of the snow-soft swarm of serene wings poised and afloat in the light.

Like flowers upon flowers
In a festival way
When hours after hours
Shed grace on the day,
White blossomlike butterflies hover and gleam through the snows of the spray.

Like snow-coloured petals
Of blossoms that flee
From storm that unsettles
The flower as the tree,
They flutter, a legion of flowers on the wing, through the field of the sea.

Through the furrowless field
Where the foam-blossoms blow
And the secrets are sealed
Of their harvest below
They float in the path of the sunbeams, as flakes or as blossoms of snow.

Till the sea's ways darken,
And the God, withdrawn,
Give ear not nor hearken
If prayer on him fawn,
And the sun's self seem but a shadow, the noon as a ghost of the dawn.

No shadow, but rather
God, father of song,
Shew grace to me, Father
God, loved of me long,
That I lose not the light of thy face, that my trust in thee work me not wrong.

While yet I make forward
With face toward thee
Not turned yet in shoreward,
Be thine upon me;
Be thy light on my forehead or ever I turn it again from the sea.

As a kiss on my brow
Be the light of thy grace,
Be thy glance on me now
From the pride of thy place:
As the sign of a sire to a son be the light on my face of thy face.

Thou wast father of olden
Times hailed and adored,
And the sense of thy golden
Great harp's monochord
Was the joy in the soul of the singers that hailed thee for master and lord.

Fair father of all
In thy ways that have trod,
That have risen at thy call,
That have thrilled at thy nod,
Arise, shine, lighten upon me, O sun that we see to be God.

As my soul has been dutiful
Only to thee,
O God most beautiful,
Lighten thou me,
As I swim through the dim long rollers, with eyelids uplift from the sea.

Be praised and adored of us
All in accord,
Father and lord of us
Alway adored,
The slayer and the stayer and the harper, the light of us all and our lord.

At the sound of thy lyre,
  At the touch of thy rod,
Air quickens to fire
  By the foot of thee trod,
The saviour and healer and singer, the living and visible God.

The years are before thee
  As shadows of thee,
As men that adore thee,
  As cloudlets that flee:
But thou art the God, and thy kingdom is heaven, and thy shrine is the sea.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN.

In a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?
So long have the grey bare walks lain guestless,
Through branches and briers if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled
  That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
  Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;
  The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,
    These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not;
  As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
  Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither
  Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
    All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels
  One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
  In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
  Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
    Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"
Did he whisper? "look forth from the flowers to the sea;
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither,
And men that love lightly may die—but we?"
And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?
And were one to the end; but what end who knows?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as a grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above them
Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
In the air now soft with a summer to be.
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever ;
Here change may come not till all change end.
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,
Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be ;
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead.

THE CAVES OF SARK.

(*The island was visited by Victor Hugo during the first years of his exile.*)

From the roots of the rocks underlying the gulfs that engird it around
Was the isle not enkindled with light of him landing, or thrilled not with sound?
Yea, surely the sea like a harper laid hand on the shore as a lyre,
As the lyre in his own for a birthright of old that was given of his sire,
And the hand of the child was put forth on the chords yet alive and aflame
From the hand of the God that had wrought it in heaven; and the hand was the same.
And the tongue of the child spake, singing; and never a note that he sang,
But the strings made answer unstricken, as though for the God they rang.

And the eyes of the child shone, lightening ; and touched
as by life at his nod,
They shuddered with music, and quickened as though
from the glance of the God.
So trembled the heart of the hills and the rocks to
receive him, and yearned
With desirous delight of his presence and love that
beholding him burned.
Yea, down through the mighty twin hollows where never
the sunlight shall be,
Deep sunk under imminent earth, and subdued to the
stress of the sea,
That feel when the dim week changes by change of their
tides in the dark,
As the wave sinks under within them, reluctant, removed
from its mark,
Even there in the terror of twilight in bloom with its
blossoms ablush,
Did a sense of him touch not the gleam of their flowers
with a fierier flush ?
Though the sun they behold not for ever, yet knew they
not over them One
Whose soul was the soul of the morning, whose song was
the song of the sun ?
But the secrets inviolate of sunlight in hollows untrodden
of day,
Shall he dream what are these who beholds not ? or he
that hath seen, shall he say ?

For the path is for passage of sea-mews; and he that
hath glided and leapt
Over sea-grass and sea-rock, alighting as one from a
citadel crept
That his foemen beleaguer, descending by darkness and
stealth, at the last
Peers under, and all is as hollow to hellward, agape and
aghast.
But afloat and afar in the darkness a tremulous colour
subsides
From the crimson high crest of the purple-peaked roof
to the soft-coloured sides
That brighten as ever they widen till downward the level
is won
Of the soundless and colourless water that knows not the
sense of the sun:
From the crown of the culminant arch to the floor of the
lakelet abloom,
One infinite blossom of blossoms innumerable aflush
through the gloom.
All under the deeps of the darkness are glimmering; all
over impends
An immeasurable infinite flower of the dark that dilates
and descends,
That exults and expands in its breathless and blind
efflorescence of heart
As it broadens and bows to the wave-ward, and breathes
not, and hearkens apart.

As a beaker inverse at a feast on Olympus, exhausted of wine,
But inlaid as with rose from the lips of Dione that left it divine;
From the lips everliving of laughter and love everlasting, that leave
In the cleft of his heart who shall kiss them a snake to corrode it and cleave.
So glimmers the gloom into glory, the glory recoils into gloom,
That the eye of the sun could not kindle, the lip not of Love could relume.
So darkens reverted the cup that the kiss of her mouth set on fire:
So blackens a brand in his eyeshot asmoulder awhile from the pyre.
For the beam from beneath and without it refrangent again from the wave
Strikes up through the portal a ghostly reverse on the dome of the cave,
On the depth of the dome ever darkling and dim to the crown of its arc:
That the sun-coloured tapestry, sunless for ever, may soften the dark.
But within through the side-seen archway aglimmer again from the right
Is the seal of the sea's tide set on the mouth of the mystery of night.

And the seal on the seventh day breaks but a little, that man by its mean
May behold what the sun hath not looked on, the stars of the night have not seen.

IN GUERNSEY.

TO THEODORE WATTS.

I.

The heavenly bay, ringed round with cliffs and moors,
Storm-stained ravines, and crags that lawns inlay,
Soothes as with love the rocks whose guard secures
The heavenly bay.

O friend, shall time take ever this away,
This blessing given of beauty that endures,
This glory shown us, not to pass but stay?

Though sight be changed for memory, love ensures
What memory, changed by love to sight, would say —
The word that seals for ever mine and yours
The heavenly bay.

II.

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,
What new delight of waters, may this be,
The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned
My mother sea?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee,
Who hast my soul for ever : cliff and sand
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand
Strike out from shore : more close it brings to me,
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,
My mother sea.

III.

Across and along, as the bay's breadth opens, and o'er us
Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and strong
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten before us
Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not wrong ;
The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's chorus ;
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the song ?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that wore us,
We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that throng,
Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us
Across and along.

IV.

On Dante's track by some funereal spell
Drawn down through desperate ways that lead not back
We seem to move, bound forth past flood and fell
On Dante's track.

The grey path ends: the gaunt rocks gape: the black
Deep hollow tortuous night, a soundless shell,
Glares darkness: are the fires of old grown slack?

Nay, then, what flames are these that leap and swell
As 'twere to show, where earth's foundations crack,
The secrets of the sepulchres of hell
On Dante's track?

V.

By mere men's hands the flame was lit, we know,
From heaps of dry waste whin and casual brands:
Yet, knowing, we scarce believe it kindled so
By mere men's hands.

Above, around, high-vaulted hell expands,
Steep, dense, a labyrinth walled and roofed with woe,
Whose mysteries even itself not understands.

The scorn in Farinata's eyes aglow
Seems visible in this flame: there Geryon stands:
No stage of earth's is here, set forth to show
By mere men's hands.

VI.

Night, in utmost noon forlorn and strong, with heart
athirst and fasting,
Hungers here, barred up for ever, whence as one whom
dreams affright
Day recoils before the low-browed lintel threatening
doom and casting
Night.

All the reefs and islands, all the lawns and highlands,
clothed with light,
Laugh for love's sake in their sleep outside: but here
the night speaks, blasting
Day with silent speech and scorn of all things known
from depth to height.

Lower than dive the thoughts of spirit-stricken fear in
souls forecasting
Hell, the deep void seems to yawn beyond fear's reach,
and higher than sight
Rise the walls and roofs that compass it about with
everlasting
Night.

VII.

The house accurst, with cursing sealed and signed,
Heeds not what storms about it burn and burst:
No fear more fearful than its own may find
The house accurst.

Barren as crime, anhungered and athirst,
Blank miles of moor sweep inland, sere and blind,
Where summer's best rebukes not winter's worst.

The low bleak tower with nought save wastes behind
Stares down the abyss whereon chance reared and nurst
This type and likeness of the accurst man's mind,
The house accurst.

VIII.

Beloved and blest, lit warm with love and fame,
The house that had the light of the earth for guest
Hears for his name's sake all men hail its name
Beloved and blest.

This eyrie was the homeless eagle's nest
When storm laid waste his eyrie : hence he came
Again, when storm smote sore his mother's breast.

Bow down men bade us, or be clothed with blame
And mocked for madness : worst, they sware, was best :
But grief shone here, while joy was one with shame,
Beloved and blest.

A DIALOGUE.

I.

Death, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee:
Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,
One shelter where our spirits fain would be,
Death, if thou wilt?

No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,
Imperial: but some roof of wildwood tree,
Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free
From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt;
Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,
Death, if thou wilt?

II.

Man, what art thou to speak and plead with me?
What knowest thou of my workings, where and how
What things I fashion? Nay, behold and see,
Man, what art thou?

Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough,
What are they but my seedlings? Earth and sea
Bear nought but when I breathe on it must bow.

Bow thou too down before me: though thou be
Great, all the pride shall fade from off thy brow,
When Time and strong Oblivion ask of thee,
Man, what art thou?

III.

Death, if thou be or be not, as was said,
Immortal; if thou make us nought, or we
Survive; thy power is made but of our dread,
Death, if thou be.

Thy might is made out of our fear of thee:
Who fears thee not, hath plucked from off thine head
The crown of cloud that darkens earth and sea.

Earth, sea, and sky, as rain or vapour shed,
Shall vanish; all the shows of them shall flee;
Then shall we know full surely, quick or dead,
Death, if thou be.

HERTHA.

I AM that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me God and man;
I am equal and whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-coloured fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird: before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves; I am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
"I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high"?
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?
Has the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?
What was, hast thou known?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother alone.

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith;
Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Alway to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off; they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark;
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-coloured hours
When my mind was as May's
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;
That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs;
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown grey from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me,
man that is I.

IN SAN LORENZO.

Is thine hour come to wake, O slumbering Night?
Hath not the Dawn a message in thine ear?
Though thou be stone and sleep, yet shalt thou hear
When the word falls from heaven—Let there be light.
Thou knowest we would not do thee the despite
To wake thee while the old sorrow and shame were near;
We spake not loud for thy sake, and for fear
Lest thou shouldst lose the rest that was thy right,
The blessing given thee that was thine alone,
The happiness to sleep and to be stone:
Nay, we kept silence of thee for thy sake
Albeit we knew thee alive, and left with thee
The great good gift to feel not nor to see;
But will not yet thine Angel bid thee wake?

A YEAR'S BURDEN.

1870.

αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπὲ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω.

Fire and wild light of hope and doubt and fear,
Wind of swift change, and clouds and hours that veer
As the storm shifts of the tempestuous year;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Hope sits yet hiding her war-wearied eyes,
Doubt sets her forehead earthward and denies,
But fear brought hand to hand with danger dies,
Dies and is burnt up in the fire of fight.

Hearts bruised with loss and eaten through with shame
Turn at the time's touch to devouring flame;
Grief stands as one that knows not her own name,
Nor if the star she sees bring day or night.

No song breaks with it on the violent air,
But shrieks of shame, defeat, and brute despair;
Yet something at the star's heart far up there
Burns as a beacon in our shipwrecked sight.

O strange fierce light of presage, unknown star,
Whose tongue shall tell us what thy secrets are,
What message trembles in thee from so far?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

From shores laid waste across an iron sea
Where the waifs drift of hopes that were to be,
Across the red rolled foam we look for thee,
Across the fire we look up for the light.

From days laid waste across disastrous years,
From hopes cut down across a world of fears,
We gaze with eyes too passionate for tears,
Where faith abides though hope be put to flight.

Old hope is dead, the grey-haired hope grown blind
That talked with us of old things out of mind,
Dreams, deeds and men the world has left behind;
Yet, though hope die, faith lives in hope's despite.

Ay, with hearts fixed on death and hopeless hands
We stand about our banner while it stands
Above but one field of the ruined lands;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Though France were given for prey to bird and beast,
Though Rome were rent in twain of king and priest,
The soul of man, the soul is safe at least
That gives death life and dead men hands to smite.

Are ye so strong, O kings, O strong men? Nay,
Waste all ye will and gather all ye may,
Yet one thing is there that ye shall not slay,
Even thought, that fire nor iron can affright.

The woundless and invisible thought that goes
Free throughout time as north or south wind blows,
Far throughout space as east or west sea flows,
And all dark things before it are made bright.

Thy thought, thy word, O soul republican,
O spirit of life, O God whose name is man:
What sea of sorrows but thy sight shall span?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

With all its coils crushed, all its rings uncurled,
The one most poisonous worm that soiled the world
Is wrenched from off the throat of man, and hurled
Into deep hell from empire's helpless height.

Time takes no more infection of it now;
Like a dead snake divided of the plough,
The rotten thing lies cut in twain; but thou,
Thy fires shall heal us of the serpent's bite.

Ay, with red cautery and a burning brand
Purge thou the leprous leaven of the land;
Take to thee fire, and iron in thine hand,
Till blood and tears have washed the soiled limbs white.

We have sinned against thee in dreams and wicked sleep;
Smite, we will shrink not; strike, we will not weep;
Let the heart feel thee; let thy wound go deep:
  Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Wound us with love, pierce us with longing, make
Our souls thy sacrifices; turn and take
Our hearts for our sin-offerings lest they break,
  And mould them with thine hands and give them
    might.

Then, when the cup of ills is drained indeed,
Will we come to thee with our wounds that bleed,
With famished mouths and hearts that thou shalt feed,
  And see thee worshipped as the world's delight.

There shall be no more wars nor kingdoms won,
But in thy sight whose eyes are as the sun
All names shall be one name, all nations one,
  All souls of men in man's one soul unite.

O sea whereon men labour, O great sea
That heaven seems one with, shall these things not be?
O earth, our earth, shall time not make us free?
  Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

MAZZINI.

1867.

(FROM *A SONG OF ITALY*.)

PRAISE be with him from earth and heaven; for he,
Father of Italy,
Upbore in holy hands the babe new-born
Through loss and sorrow and scorn,
Of no man led, of many men reviled;
Till lo, the new-born child
Gone from between his hands, and in its place,
Lo, the fair mother's face.
Blessed is he of all men, being in one
As father to her and son;
Blessed of all men living, that he found
Her weak limbs bared and bound,
And in his arms and in his bosom bore,
And as a garment wore
Her weight of want, and as a royal dress
Put on her weariness.
As in faith's hoariest histories men read,
The strong man bore at need

Through roaring rapids when all heaven was wild
The likeness of a child
That still waxed greater and heavier as he trod,
And altered, and was God.
Praise him, O winds that move the molten air,
O light of days that were,
And light of days that shall be; land and sea,
And heaven and Italy:
Praise him, O storm and summer, shore and wave,
O skies and every grave;
O weeping hopes, O memories beyond tears,
O many and murmuring years,
O sounds far off in time and visions far,
O sorrow with thy star,
And joy with all thy beacons; ye that mourn,
And ye whose light is born;
O fallen faces, and O souls arisen,
Praise him from tomb and prison,
Praise him from heaven and sunlight: and ye floods,
And windy waves of woods;
Ye valleys and wild vineyards, ye lit lakes
And happier hillside brakes,
Untrampled by the accursed feet that trod
Fields golden from their god,
Fields of their god forsaken, whereof none
Sees his face in the sun,
Hears his voice from the floweriest wildernesses;
And, barren of his tresses,

Ye bays unplucked and laurels unentwined,
That no men break or bind,
And myrtles long forgetful of the sword,
And olives unadored,
Wisdom and love, white hands that save and slay,
Praise him; and ye as they,
Praise him, O gracious might of dews and rains
That feed the purple plains,
O sacred sunbeams bright as bare steel drawn,
O cloud and fire and dawn;
Red hills of flame, white Alps, green Apennines,
Banners of blowing pines,
Standards of stormy snows, flags of light leaves,
Three wherewith Freedom weaves
One ensign that once woven and once unfurled
Makes day of all a world,
Makes blind their eyes who knew not, and outbraves
The waste of iron waves;
Ye fields of yellow fullness, ye fresh fountains,
And mists of many mountains;
Ye moons and seasons, and ye days and nights;
Ye starry-headed heights,
And gorges melting sunward from the snow,
And all strong streams that flow,
Tender as tears, and fair as faith, and pure
As hearts made sad and sure
At once by many sufferings and one love;
O mystic deathless dove;

Held to the heart of earth and in her hands
Cherished, O lily of lands,
White rose of time, dear dream of praises past—
For such as these thou wast,
That art as eagles setting toward the sun,
As fawns that leap and run,
As a sword carven with keen floral gold,
Sword for an armed god's hold,
Flower for a crowned god's forehead—O our land,
Reach forth thine holiest hand,
O mother of many sons and memories,
Stretch out thine hand to his
That raised and gave thee life to run and leap
When thou wast full of sleep,
That touched and stung thee with young blood and breath
When thou wast hard on death.
Praise him, O all her cities and her crowns,
Her towers and thrones of towns;
O noblest Brescia, scarred from foot to head
And breast-deep in the dead,
Praise him from all the glories of thy graves
That yellow Mela laves
With gentle and golden water, whose fair flood
Ran wider with thy blood:
Praise him, O born of that heroic breast,
O nursed thereat and blest,
Verona, fairer than thy mother fair,
But not more brave to bear:

Praise him, O Milan, whose imperial tread
Bruised once the German head;
Whose might, by northern swords left desolate,
Set foot on fear and fate:
Praise him, O long mute mouth of melodies,
Mantua, with louder keys,
With mightier chords of music even than rolled
From the large harps of old,
When thy sweet singer of golden throat and tongue,
Praising his tyrant, sung;
Though now thou sing not as of other days,
Learn late a better praise.
Not with the sick sweet lips of slaves that sing,
Praise thou no priest or king,
No brow-bound laurel of discoloured leaf,
But him, the crownless chief.
Praise him, O star of sun-forgotten times,
Among their creeds and crimes
That wast a fire of witness in the night,
Padua, the wise men's light:
Praise him, O sacred Venice, and the sea
That now exults through thee,
Full of the mighty morning and the sun,
Free of things dead and done;
Praise him from all the years of thy great grief,
That shook thee like a leaf
With winds and snows of torment, rain that fell
Red as the rains of hell,

Storms of black thunder and of yellow flame,
And all ill things but shame;
Praise him with all thy holy heart and strength;
Through thy walls' breadth and length
Praise him with all thy people, that their voice
Bid the strong soul rejoice,
The fair clear supreme spirit beyond stain,
Pure as the depth of pain,
High as the head of suffering, and secure
As all things that endure.
More than thy blind lord of an hundred years
Whose name our memory hears,
Home-bound from harbours of the Byzantine
Made tributary of thine,
Praise him who gave no gifts from oversea,
But gave thyself to thee.
O mother Genoa, through all years that run,
More than that other son,
Who first beyond the seals of sunset prest
Even to the unfooted west,
Whose back-blown flag scared from their sheltering seas
The unknown Atlantides,
And as flame climbs through cloud and vapour clomb
Through streams of storm and foam,
Till half in sight they saw land heave and swim—
More than this man praise him.
One found a world new-born from virgin sea;
And one found Italy.

O heavenliest Florence, from the mouths of flowers
Fed by melodious hours,
From each sweet mouth that kisses light and air,
Thou whom thy fate made fair,
As a bound vine or any flowering tree,
Praise him who made thee free.
For no grape-gatherers trampling out the wine
Tread thee, the fairest vine;
For no man binds thee, no man bruises, none
Does with thee as these have done.
From where spring hears loud through her long lit vales
Triumphant nightingales,
In many a fold of fiery foliage hidden,
Withheld as things forbidden,
But clamorous with innumerable delight
In May's red, green, and white,
In the far-floated standard of the spring,
That bids men also sing,
Our flower of flags, our witness that we are free,
Our lamp for land and sea;
From where Majano feels through corn and vine
Spring move and melt as wine,
And Fiesole's embracing arms enclose
The immeasurable rose;
From hillsides plumed with pine, and heights wind-worn
That feel the refluent morn,
Or where the moon's face warm and passionate
Burns, and men's hearts grow great,

And the swoln eyelids labour with sweet tears,
And in their burning ears
Sound throbs like flame, and in their eyes new light
Kindles the trembling night;
From faint illumined fields and starry valleys
Wherefrom the hill-wind sallies,
From Vallombrosa, from Valdarno raise
One Tuscan tune of praise.
O lordly city of the field of death,
Praise him with equal breath,
From sleeping streets and gardens, and the stream
That threads them as a dream
Threads without light the untravelled ways of sleep
With eyes that smile or weep;
From the sweet sombre beauty of wave and wall
That fades and does not fall;
From coloured domes and cloisters fair with fame,
Praise thou and thine his name.
Thou too, O little laurelled town of towers,
Clothed with the flame of flowers,
From windy ramparts girdled with young gold,
From thy sweet hillside fold
Of wallflowers and the acacia's belted bloom
And every blowing plume,
Halls that saw Dante speaking, chapels fair
As the outer hills and air,
Praise him who feeds the fire that Dante fed,
Our highest heroic head,

Whose eyes behold through floated cloud and flame
The maiden face of fame
Like April's in Valdelsa ; fair as flowers,
And patient as the hours ;
Sad with slow sense of time, and bright with faith
That levels life and death ;
The final fame, that with a foot sublime
Treads down reluctant time ;
The fame that waits and watches and is wise,
A virgin with chaste eyes,
A goddess who takes hands with great men's grief ;
Praise her, and him, our chief.
Praise him, O Siena, and thou her deep green spring,
O Fonte Branda, sing :
Shout from the red clefts of thy fiery crags,
Shake out thy flying flags
In the long wind that streams from hill to hill ;
Bid thy full music fill
The desolate red waste of sunset air
And fields the old time saw fair,
But now the hours ring void through ruined lands,
Wild work of mortal hands ;
Yet through thy dead Maremma let his name
Take flight and pass in flame,
And the red ruin of disastrous hours
Shall quicken into flowers.
Praise him, O fiery child of sun and sea,
Naples, who bade thee be ;

For till he sent the swords that scourge and save,
Thou wast not, but thy grave.
But more than all these praise him and give thanks,
Thou, from thy Tiber's banks,
From all thine hills and from thy supreme dome,
Praise him, O risen Rome.
Let all thy children cities at thy knee
Lift up their voice with thee,
Saying 'for thy love's sake and our perished grief
We laud thee, O our chief;'
Saying 'for thine hand and help when hope was dead
We thank thee, O our head;'
Saying 'for thy voice and face within our sight
We bless thee, O our light;
For waters cleansing us from days defiled
We praise thee, O our child.'

TO AURELIO SAFFI.

I.

Year after year has fallen on sleep, till change
  Hath seen the fourth part of a century fade,
Since you, a guest to whom the vales were strange
  Where Isis whispers to the murmuring shade
  Above her face by winds and willows made,
And I, elate at heart with reverence, met.
Change must give place to death ere I forget
The pride that change of years has quenched not yet.

II.

Pride from profoundest humbleness of heart
  Born, self-uplift at once and self-subdued,
Glowed, seeing his face whose hand had borne such part
  In so sublime and strange vicissitude
  As then filled all faint hearts with hope renewed
To think upon, and triumph ; though the time
Were dense and foul with darkness cast from crime
Across the heights that hope was fain to climb.

III.

Hope that had risen, a sun to match the sun
That fills and feeds all Italy with light,
Had set, and left the crowning work undone
That raised up Rome out of the shadow of night:
Yet so to have won the worst, to have fought the fight,
Seemed, as above the grave of hope cast down
Stood faith, and smiled against the whole world's frown,
A conquest lordlier than the conqueror's crown.

IV.

To have won the worst that chance could give, and worn
The wreath of adverse fortune as a sign
More bright than binds the brows of victory, borne
Higher than all trophies borne of tyrants shine—
What lordlier gift than this, what more divine,
Can earth or heaven make manifest, and bid
Men's hearts bow down and honour? Fate lies hid,
But not the work that true men dared and did.

V.

The years have given and taken away since then
More than was then foreseen of hope or fear.
Fallen are the towers of empire: all the men

Whose names made faint the heart of the earth to he
Are broken as the trust they held so dear
Who put their trust in princes: and the sun
Sees Italy, as he in heaven is, one;
But sees not him who spake, and this was done.

VI.

Not by the wise man's wit, the strong man's hand,
By swordsman's or by statesman's craft or might,
Sprang life again where life had left the land,
And light where hope nor memory now saw light:
Not first nor most by grace of these was night
Cast out, and darkness driven before the day
Far as a battle-broken host's array
Flies, and no force that fain would stay it can stay.

VII.

One spirit alone, one soul more strong than fate,
One heart whose heat was as the sundawn's fire,
Fed first with flame as heaven's immaculate
Faith, worn and wan and desperate of desire:
And men that felt that sacred breath suspire
Felt by mere speech and presence fugitive
The holy spirit of man made perfect give
Breath to the lips of death, that death might live.

VIII.

Not all as yet is yours, nor all is ours,
That shall, if righteousness and reason be,
Fulfil the trust of time with happier hours
And set their sons who fought for freedom free;
Even theirs whose faith sees, as they may not see,
Your land and ours wax lovelier in the light
Republican, whereby the thrones most bright
Look hoar and wan as eve or black as night.

IX.

Our words and works, our thoughts and songs turn thither,
Toward one great end, as waves that press and roll.
Though waves be spent and ebb like hopes that wither,
These shall subside not ere they find the goal.
We know it, who yet with unforgetful soul
See shine and smile, where none may smite or strive,
Above us, higher than clouds and winds can drive,
The soul beloved beyond all souls alive.

A SUNSET.

NOVEMBER 25, 1885.

TO VICTOR HUGO.

I.

It was the dawn of winter: sword in sheath,
Change, veiled and mild, came down the gradual air
With cold slow smiles that hid the doom beneath.
Five days to die in yet were autumn's, ere
The last leaf withered from his flowerless wreath.
South, east, and north, our skies were all blown bare,
But westward over glimmering holt and heath
Cloud, wind, and light had made a heaven more fair
Than ever dream or truth
Showed earth in time's keen youth
When men with angels communed unaware.
Above the sun's head, now
Veiled even to the ardent brow,
Rose two sheer wings of sundering cloud, that were
As a bird's poised for vehement flight,
Full-fledged with plumes of tawny fire and hoar grey light.

II.

As midnight black, as twilight brown, they spread,
But feathered thick with flame that streaked and lined
Their living darkness, ominous else of dread,
From south to northmost verge of heaven inclined
Most like some giant angel's, whose bent head
Bowed earthward, as with message for mankind
Of doom or benediction to be shed
From passage of his presence. Far behind,
Even while they seemed to close,
Stoop, and take flight, arose
Above them, higher than heavenliest thought may find
In light or night supreme
Of vision or of dream,
Immeasurable of men's eyes or mounting mind,
Heaven, manifest in manifold
Light of pure pallid amber, cheered with fire of gold.

III.

And where the fine gold faded all the sky
Shone green as the outer sea when April glows,
Inlaid with flakes and feathers fledged to fly
Of cloud suspense in rapture and repose,
With large live petals, broad as love bids lie
Full open when the sun salutes the rose,
And small rent sprays wherewith the heavens most high
Were strewn as autumn strews the garden-close

With ruinous roseleaves whirled
About their wan chill world,
Through wind-worn bowers that now no music knows,
Spoil of the dim dusk year
Whose utter night is near,
And near the flower of dawn beyond it blows;
Till east and west were fire and light,
As though the dawn to come had flushed the coming night.

IV.

The highways paced of men that toil or play,
The byways known of none but lonely feet,
Were paven of purple woven of night and day
With hands that met as hands of friends might meet—
As though night's were not lifted up to slay
And day's had waxed not weaker. Peace more sweet
Than music, light more soft than shadow, lay
On downs and moorlands wan with day's defeat,
That watched afar above
Life's very rose of love
Let all its lustrous leaves fall, fade, and fleet,
And fill all heaven and earth
Full as with fires of birth
Whence time should feed his years with light and heat:
Nay, not life's, but a flower more strong
Than life or time or death, love's very rose of song.

v.

Song visible, whence all men's eyes were lit
With love and loving wonder : song that glowed
Through cloud and change on souls that knew not it
And hearts that wist not whence their comfort flowed,
Whence fear was lightened of her fever-fit,
Whence anguish of her life-compelling load.
Yea, no man's head whereon the fire alit,
Of all that passed along that sunset road
Westward, no brow so drear,
No eye so dull of cheer,
No face so mean whereon that light abode,
But as with alien pride
Strange godhead glorified
Each feature flushed from heaven with fire that showed
The likeness of its own life wrought
By strong transfiguration as of living thought.

vi.

Nor only clouds of the everlasting sky,
Nor only men that paced that sunward way
To the utter bourne of evening, passed not by
Unblest or unillumined : none might say,
Of all things visible in the wide world's eye,
That all too low for all that grace it lay :
The lowliest lakelets of the moorland nigh,
The narrowest pools where shallowest wavelets play,

Were filled from heaven above
With light like fire of love,
With flames and colours like a dawn in May,
As hearts that lowlier live
With light of thoughts that give
Light from the depth of souls more deep than they
Through song's or story's kindling scroll,
The splendour of the shadow that reveals the soul.

VII.

For, when such light is in the world, we share,
All of us, all the rays thereof that shine:
Its presence is alive in the unseen air,
Its fire within our veins as quickening wine;
A spirit is shed on all men everywhere,
Known or not known of all men for divine.
Yea, as the sun makes heaven, that light makes fair
All souls of ours, all lesser souls than thine,
Priest, prophet, seer and sage,
Lord of a subject age
That bears thy seal upon it for a sign;
Whose name shall be thy name,
Whose light thy light of fame,
The light of love that makes thy soul a shrine;
Whose record through all years to be
Shall bear this witness written—that its womb bare thee.

VIII.

O mystery, whence to one man's hand was given
Power upon all things of the spirit, and might
Whereby the veil of all the years was riven
And naked stood the secret soul of night!
O marvel, hailed of eyes whence cloud is driven,
That shows at last wrong reconciled with right
By death divine of evil and sin forgiven!
O light of song, whose fire is perfect light!
No speech, no voice, no thought,
No love, avails us aught
For service of thanksgiving in his sight
Who hath given us all for ever
Such gifts that man gave never
So many and great since first Time's wings took flight.
Man may not praise a spirit above
Man's: life and death shall praise him: we can only love.

IX.

Life, everlasting while the worlds endure,
Death, self-abased before a power more high,
Shall bear one witness, and their word stand sure,
That not till time be dead shall this man die.
Love, like a bird, comes loyal to his lure;
Fame flies before him, wingless else to fly.

A child's heart toward his kind is not more pure,
An eagle's toward the sun no lordlier eye.
Awe sweet as love and proud
As fame, though hushed and bowed,
Yearns toward him silent as his face goes by:
All crowns before his crown
Triumphantly bow down,
For pride that one more great than all draws nigh:
All souls applaud, all hearts acclaim,
One heart benign, one soul supreme, one conquering name.

CHILDREN.

Of such is the kingdom of heaven.
No glory that ever was shed
From the crowning star of the seven
That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken
Of human or godlike tongue,
Gave ever such godlike token
Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given
To faithful or faithless eyes
Showed ever beyond clouds riven
So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven
And blood have defiled each creed:
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,
It must be heaven indeed.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER.

All the bells of heaven may ring,
All the birds of heaven may sing,
All the wells on earth may spring,
All the winds on earth may bring
  All sweet sounds together;
Sweeter far than all things heard,
Hand of harper, tone of bird,
Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,
Welling water's winsome word,
  Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none
Hearing ere its chime be done
Knows not well the sweetest one
Heard of man beneath the sun,
  Hoped in heaven hereafter;
Soft and strong and loud and light,
Very sound of very light
Heard from morning's rosiest height,
When the soul of all delight
  Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome rolled
Never forth such notes, nor told
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,
As the radiant mouth of gold
  Here that rings forth heaven.
If the golden-crested wren
Were a nightingale—why, then,
Something seen and heard of men
Might be half as sweet as when
  Laughs a child of seven.

A CHILD'S SLEEP.

As light on a lake's face moving
  Between a cloud and a cloud
Till night reclaim it, reproving
  The heart that exults too loud,

The heart that watching rejoices
  When soft it swims into sight
Applauded of all the voices
  And stars of the windy night,

So brief and unsure, but sweeter
  Than ever a moondawn smiled,
Moves, measured of no tune's metre,
  The song in the soul of a child;

The song that the sweet soul singing
  Half listens, and hardly hears,
Though sweeter than joy-bells ringing
  And brighter than joy's own tears;

The song that remembrance of pleasure
Begins, and forgetfulness ends
With a soft swift change in the measure
That rings in remembrance of friends.

As the moon on the lake's face flashes,
So haply may gleam at whiles
A dream through the dear deep lashes
Whereunder a child's eye smiles,

And the least of us all that love him
May take for a moment part
With angels around and above him,
And I find place in his heart.

A SONG OF WELCOME.

If the wind and the sunlight of April and August had
mingled the past and hereafter
In a single adorable season whose life were a rapture
of love and of laughter,
And the blithest of singers were back with a song; if
again from his tomb as from prison,
If again from the night or the twilight of ages Aristo-
phanes had arisen,
With the gold-feathered wings of a bird that were also
a god upon earth at his shoulders,
And the gold-flowing laugh of the manhood of old at
his lips, for a joy to beholders,
He alone unrebuked of presumption were able to set
to some adequate measure
The delight of our eyes in the dawn that restores
them the sun of their sense and the pleasure.
For the days of the darkness of spirit are over for all
of us here, and the season
When desire was a longing, and absence a thorn, and
rejoicing a word without reason.

For the roof overhead of the pines is astir with delight
as of jubilant voices,
And the floor underfoot of the bracken and heather
alive as a heart that rejoices.
For the house that was childless awhile, and the light
of it darkened, the pulse of it dwindled,
Rings radiant again with a child's bright feet, with the
light of his face is rekindled.
And the ways of the meadows that knew him, the
sweep of the down that the sky's belt closes,
Grow gladder at heart than the soft wind made them
whose feet were but fragrant with roses,
Though the fall of the year be upon us, who trusted
in June and by June were defrauded,
And the summer that brought us not back the desire of
our eyes be gone hence unapplauded.
For July came joyless among us, and August went
out from us arid and sterile,
And the hope of our hearts, as it seemed, was no
more than a flower that the seasons imperil,
And the joy of our hearts, as it seemed, than a thought
which regret had not heart to remember,
Till four dark months overpast were atoned for, and
summer began in September.
Hark, April again as a bird in the house with a child's
voice hither and thither:
See, May in the garden again with a child's face cheer-
ing the woods ere they wither.

June laughs in the light of his eyes, and July on the
sunbright cheeks of him slumbers,
And August glows in a smile more sweet than the
cadence of gold-mouthed numbers.
In the morning the sight of him brightens the sun, and
the noon with delight in him flushes,
And the silence of nightfall is music about him as soft
as the sleep that it hushes.
We awake with a sense of a sunrise that is not a gift of
the sundawn's giving,
And a voice that salutes us is sweeter than all sounds
else in the world of the living,
And a presence that warms us is brighter than all in the
world of our visions beholden,
Though the dreams of our sleep were as those that the
light of a world without grief makes golden.
For the best that the best of us ever devised as a likeness
of heaven and its glory,
What was it of old, or what is it and will be for ever, in
song or in story,
Or in shape or in colour of carven or painted resem-
blance, adored of all ages,
But a vision recorded of children alive in the pictures of
old or the pages?
Where children are not, heaven is not, and heaven if
they come not again shall be never:
But the face and the voice of a child are assurance of
heaven and its promise for ever.

HERSE.

When grace is given us ever to behold
A child some sweet months old,
Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,
Smiling, with bated breath,
Hush! for the holiest thing that lives is here,
And heaven's own heart how near!
How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,
Gaze on this verier one?
Heart, hold thy peace: eyes, be cast down for shame;
Lips, breathe not yet its name.
In heaven they know what name to call it; we,
How should we know? For, see!
The adorable sweet living marvellous
Strange light that lightens us
Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,
Full in a babe's warm face!
All roses that the morning rears are nought,
All stars not worth a thought,
Set this one star against them, or suppose
As rival this one rose.

What price could pay with earth's whole weight of gold
One least flushed roseleaf's fold
Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine
From each warm curve and line,
Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillume
The dappled rose-red bloom
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet
Clenched hands and curled-up feet,
That on the roses of the dawn have trod
As they came down from God,
And keep the flush and colour that the sky
Takes when the sun comes nigh,
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace
Evoked on God's own face
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,
He saw that it was good?
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,
And mere men's love too vile
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims
Read o'er the little limbs,
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,
Rejoice, revere, adore,
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,
Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,
Even to draw nigh its head,
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise
Its mild miraculous eyes

Out of their viewless vision—O, what then,
What may be said of men ?
What speech may name a new-born child ? what word
Earth ever spake or heard ?
The best men's tongue that ever glory knew
Called that a drop of dew
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb
Came forth in blameless bloom.
We have no word, as had those men most high,
To call a baby by.
Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—
A better word than these,
A better sign it was than flower or gem
That love revealed to them :
They knew that whence comes light or quickening flame,
Thence only this thing came,
And only might be likened of our love
To somewhat born above,
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,
Only to dew's own birth.
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,
Babe, when we gaze on you,
A dew-drop out of heaven whose colours are
More bright than sun or star,
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,
Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,
And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.
O child, what news from heaven ?

CRADLE SONGS.

(TO A TUNE OF BLAKE'S.)

I.

Baby, baby bright,
Sleep can steal from sight
Little of your light:

Soft as fire in dew,
Still the life in you
Lights your slumber through.

Four white eyelids keep
Fast the seal of sleep
Deep as love is deep:

Yet, though closed it lies,
Love behind them spies
Heaven in two blue eyes.

II.

Baby, baby dear,
Earth and heaven are near
Now, for heaven is here.

Heaven is every place
Where your flower-sweet face
Fills our eyes with grace.

Till your own eyes deign
Earth a glance again,
Earth and heaven are twain.

Now your sleep is done,
Shine, and show the sun
Earth and heaven are one.

III.

Baby, baby sweet,
Love's own lips are meet
Scarce to kiss your feet.

Hardly love's own ear,
When your laugh crows clear,
Quite deserves to hear.

Hardly love's own wile,
Though it please awhile,
Quite deserves your smile.

Baby full of grace,
Bless us yet a space:
Sleep will come apace.

IV.

Baby, baby true,
Man, whate'er he do,
May deceive not you.

Smiles whose love is guile,
Worn a flattering while,
Win from you no smile.

One, the smile alone
Out of love's heart grown,
Ever wins your own.

Man, a dunce uncouth,
Errs in age and youth:
Babies know the truth.

v.

Baby, baby fair,
Love is fain to dare
Bless your haughtiest air.

Baby blithe and bland,
Reach but forth a hand
None may dare withstand;

Love, though wellnigh cowed,
Yet would praise aloud
Pride so sweetly proud.

No! the fitting word
Even from breeze or bird
Never yet was heard.

VI.

Baby, baby kind,
Though no word we find,
Bear us yet in mind.

Half a little hour,
Baby bright in bower,
Keep this thought aflower—

Love it is, I see,
Here with heart and knee
Bows and worships me.

What can baby do,
Then, for love so true?—
Let it worship you.

VII.

Baby, baby wise,
Love's divine surmise
Lights your constant eyes.

Day and night and day
One mute word would they,
As the soul saith, say.

Trouble comes and goes;
Wonder ebbs and flows;
Love remains and glows.

As the fledgeling dove
Feels the breast above,
So your heart feels love.

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND.

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,
Under the roses I hid my heart.
Why would it sleep not? why should it start,
When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;
Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,
And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?
Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?
What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,
It never was writ in the traveller's chart,
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,
It never was sold in the merchant's mart.
The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,
And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;
No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,
Only the song of a secret bird.

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,
To sleep for a season and hear no word
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
Only the song of a secret bird.

ITYLUS.

Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring be done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember,
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
My heart in me is a molten ember
And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow
Could I forget or thou remember,
Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
The heart's division divideth us.
Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
I pray thee sing not a little space.
Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?
The woven web that was plain to follow,
The small slain body, the flower-like face,
Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
The voice of the child's blood crying yet
Who hath remembered me? who hath forgotten?
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
But the world shall end when I forget.

HOPE AND FEAR.

Beneath the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,
With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,
Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer
Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men grope
Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can ope,
And makes for joy the very darkness dear
That gives her wide wings play; nor dreams that fear
At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.
Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,
May truth first purge her eyesight to discern
What once being known leaves time no power to appal;
Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn
The kind wise word that falls from years that fall—
'Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all.'

A FOSTERLING.

(FROM *THALASSIUS.*)

UPON the flowery forefront of the year,
One wandering by the grey-green April sea
Found on a reach of shingle and shallower sand
Inlaid with starrier glimmering jewellery
Left for the sun's love and the light wind's cheer
Along the foam-flowered strand
Breeze-brightened, something nearer sea than land
Though the last shoreward blossom-fringe was near,
A babe asleep with flower-soft face that gleamed
To sun and seaward as it laughed and dreamed,
Too sure of either love for either's fear,
Albeit so birdlike slight and light, it seemed
Nor man nor mortal child of man, but fair
As even its twin-born tenderer spray-flowers were,
That the wind scatters like an Oread's hair.

For when July strewed fire on earth and sea
The last time ere that year,
Out of the flame of morn Cymothoe
Beheld one brighter than the sunbright sphere

Clearer, to death's bare bones a verier might,
Than shines or strikes from any man that lives.
How he that loves life overmuch shall die
The dog's death, utterly:
And he that much less loves it than he hates
All wrongdoing that is done
Anywhere always underneath the sun
Shall live a mightier life than time's or fate's.
One fairer thing he shewed him, and in might
More strong than day and night
Whose strengths build up time's towering period:
Yea, one thing stronger and more high than God,
Which if man had not, then should God not be:
And that was Liberty.
And gladly should man die to gain, he said,
Freedom; and gladlier, having lost, lie dead.
For man's earth was not, nor the sweet sea-waves
His, nor his own land, nor its very graves,
Except they bred not, bore not, hid not slaves:
But all of all that is,
Were one man free in body and soul, were his.

And the song softened, even as heaven by night
Softens, from sunnier down to starrier light,
And with its moonbright breath
Blessed life for death's sake, and for life's sake death
Till as the moon's own beam and breath confuse
In one clear hueless haze of glimmering hues

The sea's line and the land's line and the sky's,
And light for love of darkness almost dies,
As darkness only lives for light's dear love,
Whose hands the web of night is woven of:
So in that heaven of wondrous words were life
And death brought out of strife;
Yea, by that strong spell of serene increase
Brought out of strife to peace.

And the song lightened, as the wind at morn
Flashes, and even with lightening of the wind
Night's thick-spun web is thinned
And all its weft unwoven and overworn
Shrinks, as might love from scorn.
And as when wind and light on water and land
Leap as twin gods from heavenward hand in hand,
And with the sound and splendour of their leap
Strike darkness dead, and daunt the spirit of sleep,
And burn it up with fire;
So with the light that lightened from the lyre
Was all the bright heat in the child's heart stirred
And blown with blasts of music into flame
Till even his sense became
Fire, as the sense that fires the singing bird
Whose song calls night by name.
And in the soul within the sense began
The manlike passion of a godlike man,
And in the sense within the soul again
Thoughts that make men of gods and gods of men.

Clearer, to death's bare bones a verier might,
Than shines or strikes from any man that lives.
How he that loves life overmuch shall die
The dog's death, utterly:
And he that much less loves it than he hates
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And in the soul within the sense began
The manlike passion of a godlike man,
And in the sense within the soul again
Thoughts that make men of gods and gods of men.

For love the high song taught him: love that turns
God's heart toward man as man's to Godward; love
That life and death and life are fashioned of,
From the first breath that burns
Half kindled on the flowerlike yeanling's lip,
So light and faint that life seems like to slip,
To that yet weaklier drawn
When sunset dies of night's devouring dawn:
But the man dying not wholly as all men dies
If aught be left of his in live men's eyes
Out of the dawnless dark of death to rise;
If aught of deed or word
Be seen for all time or of all time heard.
Love, that though body and soul were overthrown
Should live for love's sake of itself alone,
Though spirit and flesh were one thing doomed and dead,
Not wholly annihilated.
Seeing even the hoariest ash-flake that the pyre
Drops, and forgets the thing was once afire
And gave its heart to feed the pile's full flame
Till its own heart its own heat overcame,
Outlives its own life, though by scarce a span,
As such men dying outlive themselves in man,
Outlive themselves for ever; if the heat
Outburn the heart that kindled it, the sweet
Outlast the flower whose soul it was, and flit
Forth of the body of it

Into some new shape of a strange perfume
More potent than its light live spirit of bloom,
How shall not something of that soul relive,
That only soul that had such gifts to give
As lighten something even of all men's doom
Even from the labouring womb
Even to the seal set on the unopening tomb?
And these the loving light of song and love
Shall wrap and lap round and impend above,
Imperishable; and all springs born illume
Their sleep with brighter thoughts than wake the dove
To music, when the hillside winds resume
The marriage-song of heather-flower and broom
And all the joy thereof.

And hate the song too taught him: hate of all
That brings or holds in thrall
Of spirit or flesh, free-born ere God began,
The holy body and sacred soul of man.
And wheresoever a curse was or a chain,
A throne for torment or a crown for bane
Rose, moulded out of poor men's molten pain,
There, said he, should man's heaviest hate be set
Inexorably, to faint not or forget
Till the last warmth bled forth of the last vein
In flesh that none should call a king's again,
Seeing wolves and dogs and birds that plague-strike air
Leave the last bone of all the carrion bare.

And hope the high song taught him: hope whose eyes
Can sound the seas unsoundable, the skies
Inaccessible of eyesight; that can see
What earth beholds not, hear what wind and sea
Hear not, and speak what all these crying in one
Can speak not to the sun.
For in her sovereign eyelight all things are
Clear as the closest seen and kindlier star
That marries morn and even and winter and spring
With one love's golden ring.
For she can see the days of man, the birth
Of good and death of evil things on earth
Inevitable and infinite, and sure
As present pain is, or herself is pure.
Yea, she can hear and see, beyond all things
That lighten from before Time's thunderous wings
Through the awful circle of wheel-winged periods,
The tempest of the twilight of all Gods:
And higher than all the circling course they ran
The sundawn of the spirit that was man.

And fear the song too taught him; fear to be
Worthless the dear love of the wind and sea
That bred him fearless, like a sea-mew reared
In rocks of man's foot feared,
Where nought of wingless life may sing or shine.
Fear to wax worthless of that heaven he had
When all the life in all his limbs was glad

And all the drops in all his veins were wine
And all the pulses music; when his heart,
Singing, bade heaven and wind and sea bear part
In one live song's reiterance, and they bore:
Fear to go crownless of the flower he wore
When the winds loved him and the waters knew,
The blithest life that clove their blithe life through
With living limbs exultant, or held strife
More amorous than all dalliance aye anew
With the bright breath and strength of their large life,
With all strong wrath of all sheer winds that blew,
All glories of all storms of the air that fell
Prone, ineluctable,
With roar from heaven of revel, and with hue
As of a heaven turned hell.
For when the red blast of their breath had made
All heaven aflush with light more dire than shade,
He felt it in his blood and eyes and hair
Burn as if all the fires of the earth and air
Had laid strong hold upon his flesh, and stung
The soul behind it as with serpent's tongue,
Forked like the loveliest lightnings; nor could bear
But hardly, half distraught with strong delight,
The joy that like a garment wrapped him round
And lapped him over and under
With raiment of great light
And rapture of great sound
At every loud leap earthward of the thunder

Desiring one divided from his sight,
For whose lost sake dawn was as dawn of night
And noon as night's noon in his eyes was dark.
But in the halls far under sat King Mark,
Feasting, and full of cheer, with heart uplift,
As on the night that harper gat his gift:
And music revelled on the fitful air,
And songs came floated up the festal stair,
And muffled roar of wassail, where the king
Took heart from wine-cups and the quiring string
Till all his cold thin veins rejoiced and ran
Strong as with lifeblood of a kinglier man.
But the queen shut from sound her wearied ears,
Shut her sad eyes from sense of aught save tears,
And wrung her hair with soft fierce hands, and prayed:

'O God, God born of woman, of a maid,
Christ, once in flesh of thine own fashion clad;
O very love, so glad in heaven and sad
On earth for earth's sake alway; since thou art
Pure only, I only impure of spirit and heart,
Since thou for sin's sake and the bitter doom
Didst as a veil put on a virgin's womb,
I that am none, and cannot hear or see
Or shadow or likeness or a sound of thee
Far off, albeit with man's own speech and face
Thou shine yet and thou speak yet, showing forth grace—
Ah me! grace only shed on souls that are
Lit and led forth of shadow by thy star—

Alas! to these men only grace, to these,
Lord, whom thy love draws Godward, to thy knees—
I, can I draw thee me-ward, can I seek,
Who love thee not, to love me? seeing how weak,
Lord, all this little love I bear thee is,
And how much is my strong love more than this,
My love that I love man with, that I bear
Him sinning through me sinning? wilt thou care,
God, for this love, if love be any, alas,
In me to give thee, though long since there was,
How long, when I too, Lord, was clean, even I,
That now am unclean till the day I die—
Haply by burning, harlot-fashion, made
A horror in all hearts of wife and maid,
Hateful, not knowing if ever in these mine eyes
Shone any light of thine in any wise
Or this were love at all that I bore thee?'

And the night spake, and thundered on the sea,
Ravening aloud for ruin of lives: and all
The bastions of the main cliff's northward wall
Rang response out from all their deepening length,
As the east wind girded up his godlike strength
And hurled in hard against that high-towered hold
The fleeces of the flock that knows no fold,
The rent white shreds of shattering storm: but she
Heard not nor heeded wind or storming sea,
Knew not if night were mild or mad with wind.

'Yea, though deep lips and tender hair be thinned,

Desiring one divided from his sight,
For whose lost sake dawn was as dawn of night
And noon as night's noon in his eyes was dark.
But in the halls far under sat King Mark,
Feasting, and full of cheer, with heart uplift,
As on the night that harper gat his gift:
And music revelled on the fitful air,
And songs came floated up the festal stair,
And muffled roar of wassail, where the king
Took heart from wine-cups and the quiring string
Till all his cold thin veins rejoiced and ran
Strong as with lifeblood of a kinglier man.
But the queen shut from sound her wearied ears,
Shut her sad eyes from sense of aught save tears,
And wrung her hair with soft fierce hands, and prayed:

'O God, God born of woman, of a maid,
Christ, once in flesh of thine own fashion clad;
O very love, so glad in heaven and sad
On earth for earth's sake alway; since thou art
Pure only, I only impure of spirit and heart,
Since thou for sin's sake and the bitter doom
Didst as a veil put on a virgin's womb,
I that am none, and cannot hear or see
Or shadow or likeness or a sound of thee
Far off, albeit with man's own speech and face
Thou shine yet and thou speak yet, showing forth grace—
Ah me! grace only shed on souls that are
Lit and led forth of shadow by thy star—

Alas! to these men only grace, to these,
Lord, whom thy love draws Godward, to thy knees—
I, can I draw thee me-ward, can I seek,
Who love thee not, to love me? seeing how weak,
Lord, all this little love I bear thee is,
And how much is my strong love more than this,
My love that I love man with, that I bear
Him sinning through me sinning? wilt thou care,
God, for this love, if love be any, alas,
In me to give thee, though long since there was,
How long, when I too, Lord, was clean, even I,
That now am unclean till the day I die—
Haply by burning, harlot-fashion, made
A horror in all hearts of wife and maid,
Hateful, not knowing if ever in these mine eyes
Shone any light of thine in any wise
Or this were love at all that I bore thee?'

And the night spake, and thundered on the sea,
Ravening aloud for ruin of lives: and all
The bastions of the main cliff's northward wall
Rang response out from all their deepening length,
As the east wind girded up his godlike strength
And hurled in hard against that high-towered hold
The fleeces of the flock that knows no fold,
The rent white shreds of shattering storm: but she
Heard not nor heeded wind or storming sea,
Knew not if night were mild or mad with wind.

'Yea, though deep lips and tender hair be thinned,

Though cheek wither, brow fade, and bosom wane,
Shall I change also from this heart again
To maidenhood of heart and holiness ?
Shall I more love thee, Lord, or love him less—
Ah miserable ! though spirit and heart be rent,
Shall I repent, Lord God ? shall I repent ?
Nay, though thou slay me ! for herein I am blest,
That as I loved him yet I love him best—
More than mine own soul or thy love or thee,
Though thy love save and my love save not me.
Blest am I beyond women even herein,
That beyond all born women is my sin,
And perfect my transgression : that above
All offerings of all others is my love,
Who have chosen it only, and put away for this
Thee, and my soul's hope, Saviour, of the kiss
Wherewith thy lips make welcome all thine own
When in them life and death are overthrown ;
The sinless lips that seal the death of sin,
The kiss wherewith their dumb lips touched begin
Singing in heaven.
'Where we shall never, love,
Never stand up nor sing ! for God above
Knows us, how too much more than God to me
Thy sweet love is, my poor love is to thee !
Dear, dost thou see now, dost thou hear tonight,
Sleeping, my waste wild speech, my face worn
white,

—Speech once heard soft by thee, face once kissed red !—
In such a dream as when men see their dead
And know not if they know if dead these be ?
Ah love, are thy days my days, and to thee
Are all nights like as my nights ? does the sun
Grieve thee ? art thou soul-sick till day be done,
And weary till day rises ? is thine heart
Full of dead things as mine is ? Nay, thou art
Man, with man's strength and praise and pride of life,
No bondwoman, no queen, no loveless wife
That would be shamed albeit she had not sinned.'

And swordlike was the sound of the iron wind,
And as a breaking battle was the sea.

'Nay, Lord, I pray thee let him love not me,
Love me not any more, nor like me die,
And be no more than such a thing as I.
Turn his heart from me, lest my love too lose
Thee as I lose thee, and his fair soul refuse
For my sake thy fair heaven, and as I fell
Fall, and be mixed with my soul and with hell.
Let me die rather, and only ; let me be
Hated of him so he be loved of thee,
Lord : for I would not have him with me there
Out of thy light and love in the unlit air,
Out of thy sight in the unseen hell where I
Go gladly, going alone, so thou on high
Lift up his soul and love him—Ah, Lord, Lord,
Shalt thou love as I love him ? she that poured

From the alabaster broken at thy feet
An ointment very precious, not so sweet
As that poured likewise forth before thee then
From the rehallowed heart of Magdalen,
From a heart broken, yearning like the dove,
An ointment very precious which is love—
Couldst thou, being holy and God, and sinful she,
Love her indeed as surely she loved thee?
Nay, but if not, then as we sinners can
Let us love still in the old sad wise of man.
For with less love than my love, having had
Mine, though God love him he shall not be glad.
And with such love as my love, I wot well,
He shall not lie disconsolate in hell:
Sad only as souls for utter love's sake be
Here, and a little sad, perchance, for me—
Me happy, me more glad than God above,
In the utmost hell whose fires consume not love!
For in the waste ways emptied of the sun
He would say—"Dear, thy place is void, and one
Weeps among angels for thee, with his face
Veiled, saying, *O sister, how thy chosen place*
Stands desolate, that God made fair for thee!
Is heaven not sweeter, and we thy brethren, we
Fairer than love on earth and life in hell?"
And I—with me were all things then not well?
Should I not answer—"O love, be well content;
Look on me, and behold if I repent."

This were more to me than an angel's wings.
Yea, many men pray God for many things,
But I pray that this only thing may be.'
And as a full field charging was the sea,
And as the cry of slain men was the wind.
'Yea, since I surely loved him, and he sinned
Surely, though not as my sin his be black,
God, give him to me—God, God, give him back!
For now how should we live in twain or die?
I am he indeed, thou knowest, and he is I.
Not man and woman several as we were,
But one thing with one life and death to bear.
How should one love his own soul overmuch?
And time is long since last I felt the touch,
The sweet touch of my lover, hand and breath,
In such delight as puts delight to death,
Burn my soul through, till spirit and soul and sense,
In the sharp grasp of the hour, with violence
Died, and again through pangs of violent birth
Lived, and laughed out with refluent might of mirth;
Laughed each on other and shuddered into one,
As a cloud shuddering dies into the sun.
Ah, sense is that or spirit, soul or flesh,
That only love lulls or awakes afresh?
Ah, sweet is that or bitter, evil or good,
That very love allays not as he would?
Nay, truth is this or vanity, that gives
No love assurance when love dies or lives?

This that my spirit is wrung withal, and yet
No surelier knows if haply thine forget,
Thou that my spirit is wrung for, nor can say
Love is not in thee dead as yesterday?
Dost thou feel, thou, this heartbeat whence my heart
Would send thee word what life is mine apart,
And know by keen response what life is thine?
Dost thou not hear one cry of all of mine?
O Tristram's heart, have I no part in thee?'
And all her soul was as the breaking sea,
And all her heart anhungered as the wind.
'Dost thou repent thee of the sin we sinned?
Dost thou repent thee of the days and nights
That kindled and that quenched for us their lights,
The months that feasted us with all their hours,
The ways that breathed of us in all their flowers,
The dells that sang of us with all their doves?
Dost thou repent thee of the wildwood loves?
Is thine heart changed, and hallowed? art thou grown
God's, and not mine? Yet, though my heart make moan,
Fain would my soul give thanks for thine, if thou
Be saved—yea, fain praise God, and knows not how.
How should it know thanksgiving? nay, or learn
Aught of the love wherewith thine own should burn,
God's, that should cast out as an evil thing
Mine? yea, what hand of prayer have I to cling,
What heart to prophesy, what spirit of sight
To strain insensual eyes toward increate light,

Who look but back on life wherein I sinned ?'
And all their past came wailing in the wind,
And all their future thundered in the sea.
'But if my soul might touch the time to be,
If hand might handle now or eye behold
My life and death ordained me from of old,
Life palpable, compact of blood and breath,
Visible, present, naked, very death,
Should I desire to know before the day
These that I know not, nor is man that may ?
For haply, seeing, my heart would break for fear,
And my soul timeless cast its load off here,
Its load of life too bitter, love too sweet,
And fall down shamed and naked at thy feet,
God, who wouldst take no pity of it, nor give
One hour back, one of all its hours to live
Clothed with my mortal body, that once more,
Once, on this reach of barren beaten shore,
This stormy strand of life, ere sail were set,
Had haply felt love's arms about it yet—
Yea, ere death's bark put off to seaward, might
With many a grief have bought me one delight
That then should know me never. Ah, what years
Would I endure not, filled up full with tears,
Bitter like blood and dark as dread of death,
To win one amorous hour of mingling breath,
One fire-eyed hour and sunnier than the sun,
For all these nights and days like nights but one ?

One hour of heaven born once, a stormless birth,
For all these windy weary hours of earth?
One, but one hour from birth of joy to death,
For all these hungering hours of feverish breath?
And I should lose this, having died and sinned.'

And as man's anguish clamouring cried the wind,
And as God's anger answering rang the sea.

'And yet what life—Lord God, what life for me
Has thy strong wrath made ready? Dost thou think
How lips whose thirst hath only tears to drink
Grow grey for grief untimely? Dost thou know,
O happy God, how men wax weary of woe—
Yea, for their wrong's sake that thine hand hath done
Come even to hate thy semblance in the sun?
Turn back from dawn and noon and all thy light
To make their souls one with the soul of night?
Christ, if thou hear yet or have eyes to see,
Thou that hadst pity, and hast no pity on me,
Know'st thou no more, as in this life's sharp span,
What pain thou hadst on earth, what pain hath man?
Hast thou no care, that all we suffer yet?
What help is ours of thee if thou forget?
What profit have we though thy blood were given,
If we that sin bleed and be not forgiven?
Not love but hate, thou bitter God and strange,
Whose heart as man's heart hath grown cold with change,
Not love but hate thou showest us that have sinned.'

And like a world's cry shuddering was the wind,

And like a God's voice threatening was the sea.
'Nay, Lord, for thou wast gracious; nay, in thee
No change can come with time or varying fate,
No tongue bid thine be less compassionate,
No sterner eye rebuke for mercy thine,
No sin put out thy pity—no, not mine.
Thou knowest us, Lord, thou knowest us, all we are,
He, and the soul that hath his soul for star:
Thou knowest as I know, Lord, how much more worth
Than all souls clad and clasped about with earth,
But most of all, God, how much more than I,
Is this man's soul that surely shall not die.
What righteousness, what judgment, Lord most high,
Were this, to bend a brow of doom as grim
As threats me, me the adulterous wife, on him?
There lies none other nightly by his side:
He hath not sought, he shall not seek a bride.
Far as God sunders earth from heaven above,
So far was my love born beneath his love.
I loved him as the sea-wind loves the sea,
To rend and ruin it only and waste: but he,
As the sea loves a sea-bird loved he me,
To foster and uphold my tired life's wing,
And bounteously beneath me spread forth spring,
A springtide space whereon to float or fly,
A world of happy water, whence the sky
Glowed goodlier, lightening from so glad a glass,
Than with its own light only. Now, alas!

Cloud hath come down and clothed it round with storm,
And gusts and fits of eddying winds deform
The feature of its glory. Yet be thou,
God, merciful: nay, show but justice now,
And let the sin in him that scarce was his
Stand expiated with exile: and be this
The price for him, the atonement this, that I
With all the sin upon me live, and die
With all thy wrath on me that most have sinned.'
And like man's heart relenting sighed the wind,
And as God's wrath subsiding sank the sea.
'But if such grace be possible—if it be
Not sin more strange than all sins past, and worse
Evil, that cries upon thee for a curse,
To pray such prayers from such a heart, do thou
Hear, and make wide thine hearing toward me now;
Let not my soul and his for ever dwell
Sundered: though doom keep always heaven and hell
Irreconcilable, infinitely apart,
Keep not in twain for ever heart and heart
That once, albeit by not thy law, were one;
Let this be not thy will, that this be done.
Let all else, all thou wilt of evil, be,
But no doom, none, dividing him and me.'
By this was heaven stirred eastward, and there came
Up the rough ripple a labouring light like flame;
And dawn, sore trembling still and grey with fear,
Looked hardly forth, a face of heavier cheer

Than one which grief or dread yet half enshrouds,
Wild-eyed and wan, across the cleaving clouds.
And Iseult, worn with watch long held on pain,
Turned, and her eye lit on the hound Hodain,
And all her heart went out in tears: and he
Laid his kind head along her bended knee,
Till round his neck her arms went hard, and all
The night past from her as a chain might fall:
But yet the heart within her, half undone,
Wailed, and was loth to let her see the sun.

And ere full day brought heaven and earth to flower,
Far thence, a maiden in a marriage bower,
That moment, hard by Tristram, oversea,
Woke with glad eyes Iseult of Brittany.

THE WIFE'S VIGIL.

(FROM *TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE.*)

BUT all that year in Brittany forlorn,
More sick at heart with wrath than fear of scorn
And less in love with love than grief, and less
With grief than pride of spirit and bitterness,
Till all the sweet life of her blood was changed
And all her soul from all her past estranged
And all her will with all itself at strife
And all her mind at war with all her life,
Dwelt the white-handed Iseult, maid and wife,
A mourner that for mourning robes had on
Anger and doubt and hate of things foregone.
For that sweet spirit of old which made her sweet
Was parched with blasts of thought as flowers with heat
And withered as with wind of evil will;
Though slower than frosts or fires consume or kill
That bleak black wind vexed all her spirit still.
As ripples reddening in the roughening breath
Of the eager east when dawn does night to death,
So rose and stirred and kindled in her thought
Fierce barren fluctuant fires that lit not aught,

But scorched her soul with yearning keen as hate
And dreams that left her wrath disconsolate.
When change came first on that first heaven where all
Life's hours were flowers that dawn's light hand let fall,
The sun that smote her dewy cloud of days
Wrought from its showery folds his rainbow's rays,
For love the red, for hope the gentle green,
But yellow jealousy glared pale between.
Ere yet the sky grew heavier, and her head
Bent flowerwise, chill with change and fancies fled,
She saw but love arch all her heaven across with red,
A burning bloom that seemed to breathe and beat
And waver only as flame with rapturous heat
Wavers; and all the world therewith smelt sweet,
As incense kindling from the rose-red flame:
And when that full flush waned, and love became
Scarce fainter, though his fading horoscope
From certitude of sight receded, hope
Held yet her April-coloured light aloft
As though to lure back love, a lamp sublime and soft.
But soon that light paled as a leaf grows pale
And fluttered leaf-like in the gathering gale
And melted even as dew-flakes, whose brief sheen
The sun that gave despoils of glittering green;
Till harder shone 'twixt hope and love grown cold
A sallow light like withering autumn's gold,
The pale strong flame of jealous thought, that glows
More deep than hope's green bloom or love's enkindled rose:

As though the sunflower's faint fierce disk absorbed
The spirit and heart of starrier flowers disorbed.
That same full hour of twilight's doors unbarred
To let bright night behold in Joyous Gard
The glad grave eyes of lovers far away
Watch with sweet thoughts of death the death of day
Saw lonelier by the narrower opening sea
Sit fixed at watch Iseult of Brittany.
As darkness from deep valleys void and bleak
Climbs till it clothe with night the sunniest peak
Where only of all a mystic mountain-land
Day seems to cling yet with a trembling hand
And yielding heart reluctant to recede,
So, till her soul was clothed with night indeed,
Rose the slow cloud of envious will within
And hardening hate that held itself no sin,
Veiled heads of vision, eyes of evil gleam,
Dim thought on thought, and darkling dream on dream.
Far off she saw in spirit, and seeing abhorred,
The likeness wrought on darkness of her lord
Shine, and the imperial semblance at his side
Whose shadow from her seat cast down the bride,
Whose power and ghostly presence thrust her forth:
Beside that unknown other sea far north
She saw them, clearer than in present sight
Rose on her eyes the starry shadow of night;
And on her heart that heaved with gathering fate
Rose red with storm the starless shadow of hate;

And eyes and heart made one saw surge and swell
The fires of sunset like the fires of hell.
As though God's wrath would burn up sin with shame,
The incensed red gold of deepening heaven grew flame:
The sweet green spaces of the soft low sky
Faded, as fields that withering wind leaves dry:
The sea's was like a doomsman's blasting breath
From lips afoam with ravenous lust of death.
A night like desolation, sombre-starred,
Above the great walled girth of Joyous Gard
Spread forth its wide sad strength of shadow and gloom
Wherein those twain were compassed round with doom:
Hell from beneath called on them, and she heard
Reverberate judgment in the wild wind's word
Cry, till the sole sound of their names that rang
Clove all the sea-mist with a clarion's clang,
And clouds to clouds and flames to clustering flames
Beat back the dark noise of the direful names.
Fear and strong exultation caught her breath,
And triumph like the bitterness of death,
And rapture like the rage of hate allayed
With ruin and ravin that its might hath made;
And her heart swelled and strained itself to hear
What may be heard of no man's hungering ear,
And as a soil that cleaves in twain for drouth
Thirsted for judgment given of God's own mouth
Against them, till the strength of dark desire
Was in her as a flame of hell's own fire.

Nor seemed the wrath which held her spirit in stress
Aught else or worse than passionate holiness,
Nor the ardent hate which called on judgment's rod
More hateful than the righteousness of God.

'How long, till thou do justice, and my wrong
Stand expiate? O long-suffering judge, how long?
Shalt thou not put him in mine hand one day
Whom I so loved, to spare not but to slay?
Shalt thou not cast her down for me to tread,
Me, on the pale pride of her humbled head?
Do I not well, being angry? doth not hell
Require them? yea, thou knowest that I do well.
Is not thy seal there set of bloodred light
For witness on the brows of day and night?
Who shall unseal it? what shall melt away
Thy signet from the doors of night and day?
No man, nor strength of any spirit above,
Nor prayer, nor ardours of adulterous love.
Thou art God, the strong lord over body and soul:
Hast thou not in the terrors of thy scroll
All names of all men written as with fire?
Thine only breath bids time and space respire:
And are not all things evil in them done
More clear in thine eyes than in ours the sun?
Hast thou not sight stretched wide enough to see
These that offend it, these at once and me?
Is thine arm shortened or thine hand struck down
As palsied? have thy brows not strength to frown?

Are thine eyes blind with film of withering age ?
Burns not thine heart with righteousness of rage
Yet, and the royal rancour toward thy foes
Retributive of ruin ? Time should close,
Thou said'st, and earth fade as a leaf grows grey,
Ere one word said of thine should pass away.
Was this then not thy word, thou God most high,
That sin shall surely bring forth death and die,
Seeing how these twain live and have joy of life,
His harlot and the man that made me wife ?
For is it I, perchance, I that have sinned ?
Me, peradventure, should thy wasting wind
Smite, and thy sun blast, and thy storms devour
Me with keen fangs of lightning ? should thy power
Put forth on me the weight of its awakening hour ?
Shall I that bear this burden bear that weight
Of judgment ? is my sin against thee great,
If all my heart against them burn with all its hate ?
Thine, and not mine, should hate be ? nay, but me
They have spoiled and scoffed at, who can touch not thee.
Me, me, the fullness of their joy drains dry,
Their fruitfulness makes barren : thou, not I,
Lord, is it, whom their wrongdoing clothes with shame,
That all who speak shoot tongues out at thy name
As all who hear mock mine ? Make me thy sword
At least, if even thou too be wronged, O Lord,
At all of these that wrong me : make mine hand
As lightning, or my tongue a fiery brand,

To burn or smite them with thy wrath: behold,
I have nought on earth save thee for hope or hold,
Fail me not thou: I have nought but this to crave,
Make me thy mean to give them to the grave,
Thy sign that all men seeing may speak thee just,
Thy word which turns the strengths of sin to dust,
Thy blast which burns up towers and thrones with fire.
Lord, is this gift, this grace that I require,
So great a gift, Lord, for thy grace to give
And bid me bear thy part retributive?
That I whom scorn makes mouths at, I might be
Thy witness if loud sin may mock at thee?
For lo, my life is as a barren ear
Plucked from the sheaf: dark days drive past me here
Downtrodden, while joy's reapers pile their sheaves,
A thing more vile than autumn's weariest leaves,
For these the sun filled once with sap of life.
O thou my lord that hadst me to thy wife,
Dost thou not fear at all, remembering me,
The love that bowed my whole soul down to thee?
Is this so wholly nought for man to dread,
Man, whose life walks between the quick and dead,
Naked, and warred about with wind and sea,
That one should love and hate as I do thee?
That one should live in all the world his foe
So mortal as the hate that loves him so?
Nought, is it nought, O husband, O my knight,
O strong man and indomitable in fight,

That one more weak than foam-bells on the sea
Should have in heart such thoughts as I of thee?
Thou art bound about with stately strengths for bands:
What strength shall keep thee from my strengthless hands?
Thou art girt about with goodly guards and great:
What fosse may fence thee round as deep as hate?
Thou art wise: will wisdom teach thee fear of me?
Thou art great of heart: shall this deliver thee?
What wall so massive, or what tower so high,
Shall be thy surety that thou shouldst not die,
If that which comes against thee be but I?
Who shall rise up of power to take thy part,
What skill find strength to save, what strength find art,
If that which wars against thee be my heart?
Not iron, nor the might of force afield,
Nor edge of sword, nor sheltering weight of shield,
Nor all thy fame since all thy praise began,
Nor all the love and laud thou hast of man,
Nor, though his noiseless hours with wool be shod,
Shall God's love keep thee from the wrath of God.
O son of sorrows, hast thou said at heart,
Haply, God loves thee, God shall take thy part,
Who hath all these years endured thee, since thy birth
From sorrow's womb bade sin be born on earth?
So long he hath cast his buckler over thee,
Shall he not surely guard thee even from me?

Yea, but if yet he give thee while I live
Into mine hands as he shall surely give,
Ere death at last bring darkness on thy face,
Call then on him, call not on me for grace,
Cast not away one prayer, one suppliant breath,
On me that commune all this while with death.
For I that was not and that was thy wife
Desire not but one hour of all thy life
Wherein to triumph till that hour be past;
But this mine hour I look for is thy last.'

So mused she till the fire in sea and sky
Sank, and the northwest wind spake harsh on high,
And like the sea's heart waxed her heart that heard,
Strong, dark, and bitter, till the keen wind's word
Seemed of her own soul spoken, and the breath
All round her not of darkness, but of death.

KYNANCE COVE.

(FROM *TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE.*)

YET, sailing where the shoreward ripple curled
Of the most wild sweet waves in all the world,
His soul took comfort even for joy to see
The strong deep joy of living sun and sea,
The large deep love of living sea and land,
As past the lonely lion-guarded strand
Where that huge warder lifts his couchant sides,
Asleep, above the sleepless lapse of tides,
The light sail swept, and past the unsounded caves
Unsearchable, wherein the pulse of waves
Throbs through perpetual darkness to and fro,
And the blind night swims heavily below
While heavily the strong noon broods above,
Even to the very bay whence very Love,
Strong daughter of the giant gods who wrought
Sun, earth, and sea out of their procreant thought,
Most meetly might have risen, and most divine
Beheld and heard things round her sound and shine
From floors of foam and gold to walls of serpentine.

For splendid as the limbs of that supreme
Incarnate beauty through men's visions gleam,
Whereof all fairest things are even but shadow or
dream,
And lovely like as Love's own heavenliest face,
Gleams there and glows the presence and the grace
Even of the mother of all, in perfect pride of place.
For otherwhere beneath our worldwide sky
There may not be beheld of men that die
Aught else like this that dies not, nor may stress
Of ages that bow down men's works make less
The exultant awe that clothes with power its loveliness.
For who sets eye thereon soever knows
How since these rocks and waves first rolled and rose
The marvel of their many-coloured might
Hath borne this record sensible to sight,
The witness and the symbol of their own delight;
The gospel graven of life's most heavenly law,
Joy, brooding on its own still soul with awe,
A sense of godlike rest in godlike strife,
The sovereign conscience of the spirit of life.
Nor otherwhere on strand or mountain tower
Hath such fair beauty shining forth in flower
Put on the imperial robe of such imperious power.
For all the radiant rocks from depth to height
Burn with vast bloom of glories blossom-bright
As though the sun's own hand had thrilled them through
with light

And stained them through with splendour: yet from thence
Such awe strikes rapture through the spirit of sense
From all the inaccessible sea-wall's girth,
That exultation, bright at heart as mirth,
Bows deeper down before the beauty of earth
Than fear may bow down ever: nor shall one
Who meets at Alpine dawn the mounting sun
On heights too high for many a wing to climb
Be touched with sense of aught seen more sublime
Than here smiles high and sweet in face of heaven and time.
For here the flower of fire, the soft hoar bloom
Of springtide olive-woods, the warm green gloom
Of clouded seas that swell and sound with dawn of doom,
The keen thwart lightning and the wan grey light
Of stormy sunrise crossed and vexed with night,
Flash, loom, and laugh with divers hues in one
From all the curved cliff's face, till day be done,
Against the sea's face and the gazing sun.
And whensoever a strong wave, high in hope,
Sweeps up some smooth slant breadth of stone aslope,
That glowed with duskier fire of hues less bright,
Swift as it sweeps back springs to sudden sight
The splendour of the moist rock's fervent light,
Fresh as from dew of birth when time was born
Out of the world-conceiving womb of morn.

All its quenched flames and darkling hues divine
Leap into lustrous life and laugh and shine
And darken into swift and dim decline
For one brief breath's space till the next wave run
Right up, and ripple down again, undone,
And leave it to be kissed and kindled of the sun.

SEA AND SUNRISE.

(FROM *TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE.*)

But by the sea-banks where at morn their foes
Might find them, lay those knightly name-fellows,
One sick with grief of heart and sleepless, one
With heart of hope triumphant as the sun
Dreaming asleep of love and fame and fight:
But sleep at last wrapped warm the wan young knight;
And Tristram with the first pale windy light
Woke ere the sun spake summons, and his ear
Caught the sea's call that fired his heart to hear,
A noise of waking waters: for till dawn
The sea was silent as a mountain lawn
When the wind speaks not, and the pines are dumb,
And summer takes her fill ere autumn come
Of life more soft than slumber: but ere day
Rose, and the first beam smote the bounding bay,
Up sprang the strength of the dark East, and took
With its wide wings the waters as they shook,

And hurled them huddling on a heap, and cast
The full sea shoreward with a great glad blast,
Blown from the heart of morning: and with joy
Full-souled and perfect passion, as a boy
That leaps up light to wrestle with the sea
For pure heart's gladness and large ecstasy,
Up sprang the might of Tristram; and his soul
Yearned for delight within him, and waxed whole
As a young child's with rapture of the hour
That brought his spirit and all the world to flower,
And all the bright blood in his veins beat time
To the wind's clarion and the water's chime
That called him and he followed it and stood
On the sand's verge before the grey great flood
Where the white hurtling heads of waves that met
Rose unsaluted of the sunrise yet.
And from his heart's root outward shot the sweet
Strong joy that thrilled him to the hands and feet,
Filling his limbs with pleasure and glad might,
And his soul drank the immeasurable delight
That earth drinks in with morning, and the free
Limitless love that lifts the stirring sea
When on her bare bright bosom as a bride
She takes the young sun, perfect in his pride,
Home to his place with passion: and the heart
Trembled for joy within the man whose part
Was here not least in living; and his mind
Was rapt abroad beyond man's meaner kind

And pierced with love of all things and with mirth
Moved to make one with heaven and heavenlike earth
And with the light live water. So awhile
He watched the dim sea with a deepening smile,
And felt the sound and savour and swift flight
Of waves that fled beneath the fading night
And died before the darkness, like a song
With harps between and trumpets blown along
Through the loud air of some triumphant day,
Sink through his spirit and purge all sense away
Save of the glorious gladness of his hour
And all the world about to break in flower
Before the sovereign laughter of the sun;
And he, ere night's wide work lay all undone,
As earth from her bright body casts off night,
Cast off his raiment for a rapturous fight
And stood between the sea's edge and the sea
Naked, and godlike of his mould as he
Whose swift foot's sound shook all the towers of Troy;
So clothed with might, so girt upon with joy,
As, ere the knife had shorn to feed the fire
His glorious hair before the unkindled pyre
Whereon the half of his great heart was laid,
Stood, in the light of his live limbs arrayed,
Child of heroic earth and heavenly sea,
The flower of all men: scarce less bright than he,
If any of all men latter-born might stand,
Stood Tristram, silent, on the glimmering strand.

Not long: but with a cry of love that rang
As from a trumpet golden-mouthed, he sprang,
As toward a mother's where his head might rest
Her child rejoicing, toward the strong sea's breast
That none may gird nor measure: and his heart
Sent forth a shout that bade his lips not part,
But triumphed in him silent: no man's voice,
No song, no sound of clarions that rejoice,
Can set that glory forth which fills with fire
The body and soul that have their whole desire
Silent, and freer than birds or dreams are free
Take all their will of all the encountering sea.
And toward the foam he bent and forward smote,
Laughing, and launched his body like a boat
Full to the sea-breach, and against the tide
Struck strongly forth with amorous arms made wide
To take the bright breast of the wave to his
And on his lips the sharp sweet minute's kiss
Given of the wave's lip for a breath's space curled
And pure as at the daydawn of the world.
And round him all the bright rough shuddering sea
Kindled, as though the world were even as he,
Heart-stung with exultation of desire:
And all the life that moved him seemed to aspire,
As all the sea's life toward the sun: and still
Delight within him waxed with quickening will
More smooth and strong and perfect as a flame
That springs and spreads, till each glad limb became

A note of rapture in the tune of life,
Live music wild and keen as sleep and strife:
Till the sweet change that bids the sense grow sure
Of deeper depth and purity more pure
Wrapped him and lapped him round with clearer cold,
And all the rippling green grew royal gold
Between him and the far sun's rising rim.
And like the sun his heart rejoiced in him,
And brightened with a broadening flame of mirth:
And hardly seemed its life a part of earth,
But the life kindled of a fiery birth
And passion of a new-begotten son
Between the live sea and the living sun.
And mightier grew the joy to meet full-faced
Each wave, and mount with upward plunge, and taste
The rapture of its rolling strength, and cross
Its flickering crown of snows that flash and toss
Like plumes in battle's blithest charge, and thence
To match the next with yet more strenuous sense;
Till on his eyes the light beat hard and bade
His face turn west and shoreward through the glad
Swift revel of the waters golden-clad,
And back with light reluctant heart he bore
Across the broad-backed rollers in to shore,
Strong-spirited for the chance and cheer of fight,
And donned his arms again, and felt the might
In all his limbs rejoice for strength, and praised
God for such life as that whereon he gazed,

And wist not surely its joy was even as fleet
As that which laughed and lapsed against his feet,
The bright thin grey foam-blossom, glad and hoar,
That flings its flower along the flowerless shore
On sand or shingle, and still with sweet strange snows,
As where one great white storm-dishevelled rose
May rain her wild leaves on a windy land,
Strews for long leagues the sounding slope of strand,
And flower on flower falls flashing, and anew
A fresh light leaps up whence the last flash flew,
And casts its brief glad gleam of life away
To fade not flowerwise but as drops the day
Storm-smitten, when at once the dark devours
Heaven and the sea and earth with all their flowers;
No star in heaven, on earth no rose to see,
But the white blown brief blossoms of the sea,
That make her green gloom starrier than the sky,
Dance yet before the tempest's tune, and die.
And all these things he glanced upon, and knew
How fair they shone, from earth's least flake of dew
To stretch of seas and imminence of skies,
Unwittingly, with unpresageful eyes,
For the last time. The world's half heavenly face,
The music of the silence of the place,
The confluence and the refluence of the sea,
The wind's note ringing over wold and lea,
Smote once more through him keen as fire that smote,
Rang once more through him one reverberate note,

That faded as he turned again and went,
Fulfilled by strenuous joy with strong content,
To take his last delight of labour done
That yet should be beholden of the sun.

ANADYOMENE.

(FROM *ATALANTA IN CALYDON.*)

We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair; thou art goodly, O Love;
Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;
Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire;
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire;
And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid;
As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath:
But Fate is the name of her; and his name is Death.

For an evil blossom was born
Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood,
Blood-red and bitter of fruit,
And the seed of it laughter and tears,

And the leaves of it madness and scorn;
A bitter flower from the bud,
Sprung of the sea without root,
Sprung without graft from the years.

The weft of the world was untorn
That is woven of the day on the night,
The hair of the hours was not white
Nor the raiment of time overworn,
When a wonder, a world's delight,
A perilous goddess was born;
And the waves of the sea as she came
Clove, and the foam at her feet,
Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth
A fleshly blossom, a flame
Filling the heavens with heat
To the cold white ends of the north.

And in air the clamorous birds,
And men upon earth that hear
Sweet articulate words
Sweetly divided apart,
And in shallow and channel and mere
The rapid and footless herds,
Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.

For all they said upon earth,
She is fair, she is white like a dove,
And the life of the world in her breath

Breathes, and is born at her birth :
For they knew thee for mother of love,
And knew thee not mother of death.

What hadst thou to do being born,
Mother, when winds were at ease,
As a flower of the springtime of corn,
A flower of the foam of the seas ?
For bitter thou wast from thy birth,
Aphrodite, a mother of strife;
For before thee some rest was on earth,
A little respite from tears,
A little pleasure of life ;
For life was not then as thou art,
But as one that waxeth in years
Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife ;
Earth had no thorn, and desire
No sting, neither death any dart ;
What hadst thou to do amongst these,
Thou, clothed with a burning fire,
Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,
Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas
As an ear from a seed of corn,
As a brand plucked forth of a pyre,
As a ray shed forth of the morn,
For division of soul and disease,
For a dart and a sting and a thorn ?
What ailed thee then to be born ?

Was there not evil enough,
  Mother, and anguish on earth
  Born with a man at his birth,
Wastes underfoot, and above
  Storm out of heaven, and dearth
Shaken down from the shining thereof,
    Wrecks from afar overseas
  And peril of shallow and firth,
    And tears that spring and increase
  In the barren places of mirth,
That thou, having wings as a dove,
  Being girt with desire for a girth,
    That thou must come after these,
That thou must lay on him love ?

Thou shouldst not so have been born :
  But death should have risen with thee,
    Mother, and visible fear,
      Grief, and the wringing of hands,
And noise of many that mourn ;
  The smitten bosom, the knee
    Bowed, and in each man's ear
      A cry as of perishing lands,
A moan as of people in prison,
  A tumult of infinite griefs ;
      And thunder of storm on the sands,
    And wailing of wives on the shore ;

Aud under thee newly arisen
Loud shoals and shipwrecking reefs,
Fierce air and violent light;
Sail rent and sundering oar,
Darkness, and noises of night;
Clashing of streams in the sea,
Wave against wave as a sword,
Clamour of currents, and foam;
Rains making ruin on earth,
Winds that wax ravenous and roam
As wolves in a wolfish horde;
Fruits growing faint in the tree,
And blind things dead in their birth;
Famine, and blighting of corn,
When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of; but thee
Who shall discern or declare?
In the uttermost ends of the sea
The light of thine eyelids and hair,
The light of thy bosom as fire
Between the wheel of the sun
And the flying flames of the air?
Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity,
But abide with despair and desire
And the crying of armies undone,
Lamentation of one with another
And breaking of city by city;

The dividing of friend against friend,
The severing of brother and brother;
Wilt thou utterly bring to an end?
Have mercy, mother!

For against all men from of old
Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,
And cast out gods from their places.
These things are spoken of thee.
Strong kings and goodly with gold
Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,
And made their kingdoms and races
As dust and surf of the sea.
All these, overburdened with woes
And with length of their days waxen weak,
Thou slewest; and sentest moreover
Upon Tyro an evil thing,
Rent hair and a fetter and blows
Making bloody the flower of the cheek,
Though she lay by a god as a lover,
Though fair, and the seed of a king.
For of old, being full of thy fire,
She endured not longer to wear
On her bosom a saffron vest,
On her shoulder an ashwood quiver;
Being mixed and made one through desire
With Enipeus, and all her hair
Made moist with his mouth, and her breast
Filled full of the foam of the river.

THE DEATH OF MELEAGER.

(FROM *ATALANTA IN CALYDON.*)

MELEAGER.

LET your hands meet
Round the weight of my head;
Lift ye my feet
As the feet of the dead;
For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten as lead.

CHORUS.

O thy luminous face,
Thine imperious eyes!
O the grief, O the grace,
As of day when it dies!
Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and suppression of sighs?

MELEAGER.

Is a bride so fair?
Is a maid so meek?
With unchapleted hair,
With unfilleted cheek,
Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as blessing to speak.

ATALANTA.

I would that with feet
Unsandalled, unshod,
Overbold, overfleet,
I had swum not nor trod
From Arcadia to Calydon northward, a blast of the envy of God.

MELEAGER.

Unto each man his fate;
Unto each as he saith
In whose fingers the weight
Of the world is as breath;
Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands had laid hold upon death.

CHORUS.

Not with cleaving of shields
And their clash in thine ear,

When the lord of fought fields
Breaketh spearshaft from spear,
Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with travail and labour and fear.

MELEAGER.

Would God he had found me
Beneath fresh boughs!
Would God he had bound me
Unawares in mine house,
With light in mine eyes, and songs in my lips, and a crown on my brows!

CHORUS.

Whence art thou sent from us?
Whither thy goal?
How art thou rent from us,
Thou that wert whole,
As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sundering of body and soul!

MELEAGER.

My heart is within me
As an ash in the fire;
Whosoever hath seen me,
Without lute, without lyre,
Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that were ill to desire.

CHORUS.

Who shall raise thee
From the house of the dead?
Or what man praise thee
That thy praise may be said?
Alas thy beauty! alas thy body! alas thine head!

MELEAGER.

But thou, O mother,
The dreamer of dreams,
Wilt thou bring forth another
To feel the sun's beams
When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail by impassable streams?

ŒNEUS.

What thing wilt thou leave me
Now this thing is done?
A man wilt thou give me,
A son for my son,
For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the desirable one?

CHORUS.

Thou wert glad above others,
Yea, fair beyond word;

Thou wert glad among mothers;
For each man that heard
Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings to the feet of a bird.

ŒNEUS.

Who shall give back
Thy face of old years,
With travail made black,
Grown grey among fears,
Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of tears?

MELEAGER.

Though thou art as fire
Fed with fuel in vain,
My delight, my desire,
Is more chaste than the rain,
More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are that live without stain.

ATALANTA.

I would that as water
My life's blood had thawn,
Or as winter's wan daughter
Leaves lowland and lawn
Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee made dark in thy dawn.

CHORUS.

When thou dravest the men
Of the chosen of Thrace,
None turned him again
Nor endured he thy face
Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light from a terrible place.

ŒNEUS.

Thou shouldst die as he dies
For whom none sheddeth tears;
Filling thine eyes
And fulfilling thine ears
With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the beauty, the splendour of spears.

CHORUS.

In the ears of the world
It is sung, it is told,
And the light thereof hurled
And the noise thereof rolled
From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the fleece of gold.

MELEAGER.

Would God ye could carry me
Forth of all these;

Heap sand and bury me
By the Chersonese
Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the thunder of Pontic seas.

ŒNEUS.

Dost thou mock at our praise
And the singing begun
And the men of strange days
Praising my son
In the folds of the hills of home, high places of Calydon?

MELEAGER.

For the dead man no home is;
Ah, better to be
What the flower of the foam is
In fields of the sea,
That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the gulf-stream a garment for me.

CHORUS.

Who shall seek thee and bring
And restore thee thy day,
When the dove dipt her wing
And the oars won their way
Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits of Propontis with spray?

MELEAGER.

Will ye crown me my tomb
Or exalt me my name,
Now my spirits consume,
Now my flesh is a flame?
Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleeping
to praise me or shame.

CHORUS.

Turn back now, turn thee,
As who turns him to wake;
Though the life in thee burn thee,
Couldst thou bathe it and slake
Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east
upon west waters break?

MELEAGER.

Would the winds blow me back
Or the waves hurl me home?
Ah, to touch in the track
Where the pine learnt to roam
Cold girdles and crowns of the sea-gods, cool blossoms
of water and foam!

CHORUS.

The gods may release
That they made fast;

Thy soul shall have ease
In thy limbs at the last;
But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that is overpast?

MELEAGER.

Not the life of men's veins,
Not of flesh that conceives;
But the grace that remains,
The fair beauty that cleaves
To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the dews on the leaves.

CHORUS.

Thou wert helmsman and chief;
Wilt thou turn in an hour,
Thy limbs to the leaf,
Thy face to the flower,
Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who divide and devour?

MELEAGER.

The years are hungry,
They wail all their days;
The gods wax angry
And weary of praise;
And who shall bridle their lips? and who shall straiten their ways?

CHORUS.

The gods guard over us
With sword and with rod;
Weaving shadow to cover us,
Heaping the sod,
That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's face before God.

OREITHYIA.

(FROM *ERECHTHEUS.*)

Out of the north wind grief came forth,
And the shining of a sword out of the sea.
Yea, of old the first-blown blast blew the prelude of this last,
The blast of his trumpet upon Rhodope.
Out of the north skies full of his cloud,
With the clamour of his storms as of a crowd
At the wheels of a great king crying aloud,
At the axle of a strong king's car
That has girded on the girdle of war—
With hands that lightened the skies in sunder
And feet whose fall was followed of thunder,
A God, a great God strange of name,
With horse-yoke fleeter-hoofed than flame,
To the mountain bed of a maiden came,
Oreithyia, the bride mismated,
Wofully wed in a snow-strewn bed
With a bridegroom that kisses the bride's mouth dead;
Without garland, without glory, without song,

As a fawn by night on the hills belated,
Given over for a spoil unto the strong.

From lips how pale so keen a wail
At the grasp of a God's hand on her she gave,
When his breath that darkens air made a havoc of her hair,
It rang from the mountain even to the wave;
Rang with a cry, *Woe's me, woe is me!*
From the darkness upon Hæmus to the sea:
And with hands that clung to her new lord's knee,
As a virgin overborne with shame,
She besought him by her spouseless fame,
By the blameless breasts of a maid unmarried
And locks unmaidenly rent and harried,
And all her flower of body, born
To match the maidenhood of morn,
With the might of the wind's wrath wrenched and torn.
Vain, all vain as a dead man's vision
Falling by night in his old friends' sight,
To be scattered with slumber and slain ere light;
Such a breath of such a bridegroom in that hour
Of her prayers made mock, of her fears derision,
And a ravage of her youth as of a flower.

With a leap of his limbs as a lion's, a cry from his lips as of thunder,
In a storm of amorous godhead filled with fire,

From the height of the heaven that was rent with the roar of his coming in sunder,
Sprang the strong God on the spoil of his desire.
And the pines of the hills were as green reeds shattered,
And their branches as buds of the soft spring scattered,
And the west wind and east, and the sound of the south,
Fell dumb at the blast of the north wind's mouth,
At the cry of his coming out of heaven.
And the wild beasts quailed in the rifts and hollows
Where hound nor clarion of huntsman follows,
And the depths of the sea were aghast, and whitened,
And the crowns of their waves were as flame that lightened,
And the heart of the floods thereof was riven.

But she knew not him coming for terror, she felt not her wrong that he wrought her,
When her locks as leaves were shed before his breath,
And she heard not for terror his prayer, though the cry was a God's that besought her,
Blown from lips that strew the world-wide seas with death.
For the heart was molten within her to hear,
And her knees beneath her were loosened for fear,
And her blood fast bound as a frost-bound water,
And the soft new bloom of the green earth's daughter
Wind-wasted as blossom of a tree ;

As the wild God rapt her from earth's breast lifted,
On the strength of the stream of his dark breath drifted,
From the bosom of earth as a bride from the mother,
With storm for bridesman and wreck for brother,
As a cloud that he sheds upon the sea.

STORM AND BATTLE.

(FROM *ERECHTHEUS.*)

LET us lift up the strength of our hearts in song,
And our souls to the height of the darkling day.
If the wind in our eyes blow blood for spray,
Be the spirit that breathes in us life more strong,
Though the prow reel round and the helm point wrong,
And sharp reefs whiten the shoreward way.

For the steersman time sits hidden astern,
With dark hand plying the rudder of doom,
And the surf-smoke under it flies like fume
As the blast shears off and the oar-blades churn
The foam of our lives that to death return,
Blown back as they break to the gulfing gloom.

What cloud upon heaven is arisen, what shadow, what sound,
From the world beyond earth, from the night underground,
That scatters from wings unbeholden the weight of its darkness around ?

For the sense of my spirit is broken, and blinded its eye,
As the soul of a sick man ready to die,
With fear of the hour that is on me, with dread if an end be not nigh.

O Earth, O Gods of the land, have ye heart now to see and to hear
What slays with terror mine eyesight and seals mine ear?
O fountains of streams everlasting, are all ye not shrunk up and withered for fear?

Lo, night is arisen on the noon, and her hounds are in quest by day,
And the world is fulfilled of the noise of them crying for their prey,
And the sun's self stricken in heaven, and cast out of his course as a blind man astray.

From east to west of the south sea-line
Glitters the lightning of spears that shine;
As a storm-cloud swoln that comes up from the skirts of the sea,
By the wind for helmsman to shoreward ferried,
So black behind them the live storm serried
Shakes earth with the tramp of its foot, and the terror to be.

Shall the sea give death whom the land gave birth ?
O Earth, fair mother, O sweet live Earth,
Hide us again in thy womb from the waves of it, help us or hide.
As a sword is the heart of the God thy brother,
But thine as the heart of a new-made mother,
To deliver thy sons from his ravin, and rage of his tide.

O strong north wind, the pilot of cloud and rain,
For the gift we gave thee what gift hast thou given us again ?
O God dark-winged, deep-throated, a terror to forth-faring ships by night,
What bride-song is this that is blown on the blast of thy breath ?
A gift but of grief to thy kinsmen, a song but of death,
For the bride's folk weeping, and woe for her father, who finds thee against him in fight.

Turn back from us, turn thy battle, take heed of our cry ;
Let thy dread breath sound, and the waters of war be dry ;
Let thy strong wrath shatter the strength of our foemen, the sword of their strength and the shield ;

As vapours in heaven, or as waves or the wrecks of ships,
So break thou the ranks of their spears with the breath of thy lips,
Till their corpses have covered and clothed as with raiment the face of the sword-ploughed field.

O son of the rose-red morning, O God twin-born with the day,
O wind with the young sun waking, and winged for the same wide way,
Give up not the house of thy kin to the host thou hast marshalled from northward for prey.

From the cold of thy cradle in Thrace, from the mists of the fountains of night,
From the bride-bed of dawn whence day leaps laughing, on fire for his flight,
Come down with their doom in thine hand on the ships thou hast brought up against us to fight.

For now not in word but in deed is the harvest of spears begun,
And its clamour outbellows the thunder, its lightning outlightens the sun.
From the springs of the morning it thunders and lightens across and afar
To the wave where the moonset ends and the fall of the last low star.

With a trampling of drenched red hoofs and an earthquake of men that meet,
Strong war sets hand to the scythe, and the furrows take fire from his feet.
Earth groans from her great rent heart, and the hollows of rocks are afraid,
And the mountains are moved, and the valleys as waves in a storm-wind swayed.
From the roots of the hills to the plain's dim verge and the dark loud shore,
Air shudders with shrill spears crossing, and hurtling of wheels that roar.
As the grinding of teeth in the jaws of a lion that foam as they gnash
Is the shriek of the axles that loosen, the shock of the poles that crash.
The dense manes darken and glitter, the mouths of the mad steeds champ,
Their heads flash blind through the battle, and death's foot rings in their tramp.
For a fourfold host upon earth and in heaven is arrayed for the fight,
Clouds ruining in thunder and armies encountering as clouds in the night.
Mine ears are amazed with the terror of trumpets, with darkness mine eyes,
At the sound of the sea's host charging that deafens the roar of the sky's.

White frontlet is dashed upon frontlet, and horse against horse reels hurled,
And the gorge of the gulfs of the battle is wide for the spoil of the world.

And the meadows are cumbered with shipwreck of chariots that founder on land,
And the horsemen are broken with breach as of breakers, and scattered as sand.
Through the roar and recoil of the charges that mingle their cries and confound,
Like fire are the notes of the trumpets that flash through the darkness of sound.
As the swing of the sea churned yellow that sways with the wind as it swells
Is the lift and relapse of the wave of the chargers that clash with their bells;
And the clang of the sharp shrill brass through the burst of the wave as it shocks
Rings clean as the clear wind's cry through the roar of the surge on the rocks:
And the heads of the steeds in their headgear of war, and their corsleted breasts,
Gleam broad as the brows of the billows that brighten the storm with their crests,
Gleam dread as their bosoms that heave to the ship-wrecking wind as they rise,

Filled full of the terror and thunder of water, that slays as it dies.
So dire is the glare of their foreheads, so fearful the fire of their breath,
And the light of their eyeballs enkindled so bright with the lightnings of death ;
And the foam of their mouths as the sea's when the jaws of its gulf are as graves,
And the ridge of their necks as the wind-shaken mane on the ridges of waves :
And their fetlocks afire as they rear drip thick with a dewfall of blood
As the lips of the rearing breaker with froth of the manslaying flood.
And the whole plain reels and resounds as the fields of the sea by night
When the stroke of the wind falls darkling, and death is the seafarer's light.

But thou, fair beauty of heaven, dear face of the day nigh dead,
What horror hath hidden thy glory, what hand hath muffled thine head ?
O sun, with what song shall we call thee, or ward off thy wrath by what name,
With what prayer shall we seek to thee, soothe with what incense, assuage with what gift,

If thy light be such only as lightens to deathward the seaman adrift
With the fire of his house for a beacon, that foemen have wasted with flame?
Arise now, lift up thy light; give ear to us, put forth thine hand,
Reach toward us thy torch of deliverance, a lamp for the night of the land.
Thine eye is the light of the living, no lamp for the dead;
O, lift up the light of thine eye on the dark of our dread.
Who hath blinded thee? who hath prevailed on thee? who hath ensnared?
Who hath broken thy bow, and the shafts for thy battle prepared?
Have they found out a fetter to bind thee, a chain for thine arm that was bared?
Be the name of thy conqueror set forth, and the might of thy master declared.
O God, fair God of the morning, O glory of day,
What ails thee to cast from thy forehead its garland away?
To pluck from thy temples their chaplet enwreathed of the light,
And bind on the brows of thy godhead a frontlet of night?

Thou hast loosened the necks of thine horses, and goaded
their flanks with affright,
To the race of a course that we know not on ways that
are hid from our sight.
As a wind through the darkness the wheels of their
chariot are whirled,
And the light of its passage is night on the face of
the world.
And there falls from the wings of thy glory no help
from on high,
But a shadow that smites us with fear and desire of
thine eye.
For our hearts are as reeds that a wind on the water
bows down and goes by,
To behold not thy comfort in heaven that hath left us
untimely to die.

MARINO FALIERO.

(FROM THE TRAGEDY OF *MARINO FALIERO*; ACT II. SCENE I.)

Marino Faliero, the octogenarian Doge of Venice, hears from his nephew and adopted son of a deadly insult offered to the reputation of his young wife by a nobleman whom he has publicly disgraced for misconduct in public.

MARINO FALIERO *and the* DUCHESS.

Faliero. It does not please thee, then, if silence have
Speech, and if thine speak true, to hear me praise
Bertuccio? Has my boy deserved of thee
Ill? or what ails thee when I praise him?
Duchess. Sir,
How should it hurt me that you praise—
Faliero. My son,
Mine, more than once my brother's: how, indeed?
Duchess. Have I the keeping of your loves in charge
To unseal or seal their utterance up, my lord?
Faliero. Again, thy lord! I am lord of all save thee.
Duchess. You are sire of all this people.
Faliero. Nay, by Christ,

A bitter brood were mine then, and thyself
Mismated worse than April were with snow
Or January with harvest, being his bride
Who bore so dire a charge of fatherhood.
Thou, stepmother of Venice? and this hand,
That could not curb nor guide against its will
A foot that fell but heavier than a dove's,
What power were in it to hold obedience fast,
Laid on the necks of lions?

Duchess. Why, men say
The lion will stoop not save to ladies' hands,
But such as mine may lead him.

Faliero. Thine? I think
The very wolf would kiss and rend it not.

Duchess. The very sea-wolf?

Faliero. Verily, so meseems.

Duchess. For so the strong sea-lion of Venice doth.

Faliero. This is a perilous beast whereof thou sayest
So sweet a thing so far from like to be—
A horrible and a fiend-faced shape, men call
The lion of the waters.

Duchess. But St. Mark
Holds his in leash of love more fast, my lord,
Than ever violence may.

Faliero. By heaven and him,
Thy sweet wit's flight is even too fleet for me:
No marvel though thy gentle scorn smite sore
On weaker wits of younglings: yet I would,

Being more my child than even my wife to me,
Thine heart were more a sister's toward my son.

Duchess. So is it indeed—and shall be so—and more,
The more we love our father and our lord,
Shall our two loves grow full, grow fire that springs
To Godward from the sacrifice it leaves
Consumed for man's burnt-offering.

Faliero. What! thine eyes
Are very jewels of even such fire indeed.
I thought not so to kindle them: but yet
My heart grows great in gladness given of thine
Whose truth in such bright silence as is God's
Speaks love aloud and lies not.

Duchess. No, my lord.

Faliero. It is not truth nor love then, sweet my child,
That lightens from thine eyeshot?

Duchess. Yea, my lord.

Faliero. I grow less fond than foolish, troubling thee,
Who yet am held or yet would hold myself
Not yet unmanned with dotage. Sooth is this,
I am lighter than my daily mood today
And heedless haply lest I wrong mine age
And weary thine with words unworthy thee
Or him that would be honoured of the world
Less than beloved—with love not all unmeet—
Of one or twain he loves as old men may.
Bertuccio loves me; thou dost hate me not

That like a frost I touch thy flower, and breathe
As March breathes back the spirit of winter dead
On May that dwells where thou dost: but my son
Finds no more grace of thee to comfort him
Than April wins of the east wind. Wot thou well,
The long loose tongues of Tuscan wit would cast
Ill comment on this care of mine to bring
More close my wife's heart and my son's, being young,
And I a waif of winter, left astrand
Above the soft sea's tidemark whose warm lip
Is love's, that loves not age's: but I think
We are none of those whose folly, set in shame,
Makes mirth for John of Florence.

Duchess. By God's grace,
No.

Faliero. And by grace of pure Venetian pride
And blood of blameless mothers. By St. Mark,
Shame, that stings sharpest of the worms in hell,
Seems, if those light-souled folks sing true, to them
No more a burning poison than the fly's
We brush from us, and know not: but for men
The eternal fire hath no such fang to smite
As this their jests make nought of. Life is brief—
Albeit thou knowest not, nor canst well believe,
But life is long and lovesome as thine age
In vision sees it, and in heart uplift
Plays prelude clear of presage—brief and void
Where laughing lusts fulfil its length of days

And nought save pleasure born seems worth desire;
But long and full of fruit in all men's sight
Whereon the wild worm feeds not, nor the sun
Strikes, nor the wind makes war, nor frost lays hold,
Is the ageless life of honour, won and worn
With heart and hand most equal, and to time
Given as a pledge that something born of time
Is mightier found than death, and wears of right
God's name of everlasting.

Duchess. Child I am,
Or child my lord will call me, yet himself
Knows this not better, holds no truer this truth,
Nor keeps more fast his faith in it than I.

Faliero. No need thy tongue should witness with thine eyes
How thine heart beats toward honour. Blind were he,
And mad with base brainsickness even to death,
Who seeing thee should not see it. Those Florentines
With names more gracious than their customs crown
Glad heads of graceless women; jewelled names
That mock the bright stone's fire of constant heart,
Diamante, Gemma; thine, were thine as these,
Might dare the vaunt unchallenged: such a name
Is in those eyes writ clear with fire more keen
Than ever shame bade shine or sin made burn
Where grace lay dead ere death. How now, my son?

Enter BERTUCCIO.

Bertuccio. Most noble uncle—

Faliero. Nay, but art thou mazed?
No reverence toward our lady, nor a look
Save as of one distraught with fear, whose dreams
Are still as fire before his eyes by night
That leaves them dark by daytime? Yestereve,
Hadst thou so looked upon the bull, by Christ,
Thou hadst come not home his conqueror.

Duchess. Sir, perchance
Your nephew with your grace would speak alone.

Bertuccio. Ay, madam.

Faliero. Nay, sir. Why, what coil is this?
Thine eyes look scarce half drunken, but thy speech
Is thicker than with wine.

Duchess. Good day, my lords.

Faliero. Pass out of earshot if thou list, but pass
—I pray thee, sweet!—no further.

[*Duchess withdraws.*

Now, my son,
If nought bemuse thy brain or bind thy tongue,
Speak.

Bertuccio. Sire, I may not.

Faliero. God consume thee! nay,
But bring thy wits back healed—what dost thou then
Here?

Bertuccio. What must needs, in my despite and thine,

Be done, and yet should be not. None but I
Dare tell my sire that Venice rings and roars
Aloud with monstrous mockery whence our name
Is rent as carrion by the vulturous beaks
That feed on fame and soil it. Sir, it were
A shame beyond all treason for my lips
To take this taint upon them : read, and see
What all have seen that in thine hall of state
Since dawn have entered, on thy sovereign seat
Nailed up in God's defiance and ours, a lie
That hell would hear not unrebuked, nor heaven
Endure and find no thunder.

[*Gives a paper to Faliero.*

Faliero. God us aid!
Why, if the pageant match thy prologue, man,
The stage should shake to bear it.—Body of God!
What?

Duchess. Sir! my lord!

Bertuccio. Forbear him.

Faliero. Does the sun
Shine?—Did he smite me on the face?

Duchess. Who?

Faliero. He.

[*Pointing to Bertuccio.*

Duchess. What have you given him?

Bertuccio. Ask not.

Faliero. Let me think—
Art not thou too Faliero, and my son?

Bertuccio. Ay.

Faliero. By the glory of God in heaven, I swear,
I think not as I thought it.

Bertuccio. Then your thought
Errs, and the mind whose passion brings it forth
Strays far, and shakes toward ruin.

Faliero. It may be so,
Sir; it may be so.

Duchess. Heaven have pity on all!

Faliero. Madam, what man is this that speaks to me?

Duchess. My lord your nephew.

Faliero. Thine? thy lord is this?
Thy man? thy master?

Bertuccio. Sir, bethink you—

Faliero. Ay—
I will bethink me surely. Fair my wife,
I pray you pardon mine unreverend age,
Shamed as it stands before you—spurned, and made
A thing for boys to spit at. In my sight,
I pray you, do not smile too broad at it.
White hairs, if he that bears them bear my place,
Are held, I know, unvenerable of all.
Fair sir, you are young, and men may honour you:
Tell me, who am blind, how I should bear myself
In the eyes of men who see me that I see
Nothing.

Duchess. O God, be pitiful!

Bertuccio. My lord,
Refrain yourself; you stagger toward the pit
Whose gulf is madness; gather up your heart;
Give not all rein to rage.
Faliero. I will not, sir.
There was a noise of hissing in mine ears;
I could not hear you for it; and in mine eyes
Blank night, and fire, and blindness. Now I see
The leprous beggar whom the town spits out
Hath more than I of honour. Many a year
I have dreamed of many a deed that brought no shame,
Not shame at all, but praise: these were not mine,
I know them now, they were not: mine have earned,
For the utmost crown and close of all my life
Shame. I would know, were God not stricken dumb,
What deed I have done that this should fall on me.
Bertuccio. My lord—
Faliero. Thy servant's servant, and a dog.
Yet art thou, too, vile; nay, not vile as I,
But baser than a beaten bondman.
Bertuccio. Sir,
If madness make you not a thrall indeed,
But reverence yet claim reverence, take some thought
Not for yourself, nor me.
Faliero. Dost thou desire
So much for her sake of me? Son of mine,
Look well upon thy father: let mine eyes

Take all the witness of the spirit in thine,
That I may know what heart thou hast indeed.
Bertuccio, if thine eyes lie, then is God
Dead, and the world hell's refuse.
Bertuccio. Sire and lord,
If ever I have lied to you, I lie
Now.
Faliero. I believe thou liest not. Mark me, son,
This is no little trust I put in thee,
Believing yet, in face of this I read,
That man or God may lie not.
Bertuccio. Speak to her.
Faliero. Take comfort, child: this world is foul, God wot,
That gives thee need of comfort.
Duchess. I have none—
No need, I mean—if nought fare ill with you.
Faliero. Much, much there is fares ill with all men: yet,
With thee, if righteousness were loved in heaven,
Should nought at all fare ill for ever. Sweet,
As thou wouldst fain, if thou couldst ever sin,
Find for that sin forgiveness, pardon me.
I am great in years, and what I had borne in youth,
Not well perchance, yet better, now, being old,
I cannot bear, thou seest, at all. For this
Forgive me: not with will of mine it was
That thus I scared so sore thy harmless heart.

Speak to me not now: ere this hour be full,
It may be we may speak awhile again
Together: now must none abide with me. [*Exit.*

Duchess. What have they said?

Bertuccio. Ask never that of man.

Duchess. What have they said of me?

Bertuccio. I cannot say.

Duchess. Thou wilt not—being mine enemy. Why, for shame
You should not, sir, keep silence.

Bertuccio. Yet I will.

Duchess. I never dreamt so dark a dream as this.

Bertuccio. God send it no worse waking.

Duchess. Now I know
You are even indeed her enemy, who believed
She had never so deserved of you. I have
No friend where friends I thought were mine, and find,
Where never I thought to find them, enemies. Whence
Have I deserved by chance of any man
That he should be mine enemy?

Bertuccio. If I be,
I would not strike you shamefully at heart,
But rather bear a bitterer blame than this
Than right myself with doing you wrong. Would God
Your enemies and mine uncle's all were I!

Duchess. Do you know them—these—what manner of men they are?

Bertuccio. Save as I know that hell breeds worms
and fire,
No.
Duchess. Have I merited these? Have we that
loved,
Have we that love, in God's clear sight or man's,
Sinned?
Bertuccio. Nay, not thou, if heaven by love for earth
Sins not: if thou, then God in loving man
Sins.
Duchess. Nay: for yet you never kissed my lips.
That day the truth sprang forth of thine, I swore
It should not bring my soul and thine to shame.
And thou too, didst not thou, for very love,
Swear it?
Bertuccio. And stands mine oath not whole?
Duchess. Give God
Honour, who hath kept in us our honour fast.
Whatever come between our death and this,
For that I thank him.
Bertuccio. Ah, my love, my light,
Soul of my soul, and holier heart of mine,
Thee, thee I thank, that yet I live, and yet
Love, and yet stand not in all true men's eyes
Shamed. Am I pure as thou, that save through thee
I should be found no viler than I am?
Hadst thou been other, I perchance, God knows,
Had been a baser thing than galls us now.

Duchess. Ay! but I knew it or ever I wrung it forth—
Me then they smite at, and my lord in me,
Who have smitten him so sorely?
Bertuccio. Dear, how else?
When seemed our sire a furious weakling, made
For any wind to work upon and wrest
Awry with passion that had struck no root
Deep even as love or honour?
Duchess. Woe is me!
Would God I were not!

Re-enter FALIERO.

Faliero. Pray thou no such prayer:
I heard that cry to Godward: call it back.
My faultless child, if prayer seem good to thee,
Pray: but for nought like death. And doubt thou not
But yet thou hast given me daily more good things
Than God can give of evil; nor may man,
Albeit his fang be deadlier than the snake's
And strike too deep for God or thee to heal,
Undo the good thou didst, or make a curse
Grow where thou sowedst a blessing. Go in peace;
And take with thee love's full thanksgiving. Go.
Duchess. My father, and my lord!
Faliero. My child and wife,
Go. [*Exit Duchess.*

Now to thee, son. When thou gavest me this,
I do not ask thee if thou knewest the man.
It were impossible, out of reach of thought,
That mine own brother's and mine own heart's child
Should give it me, and say—I know the man:
He lives: I did not take him by the throat
And make the lying soul leap through his lips
Before I told thee such a thing could live.

Bertuccio. You do me right: I know not.

Faliero. This remains,
That we should know: being known, to thee nor me
Belongs the doomsman's labour of the lash
That is to scourge him out of life. My son,
I charge thee by thine honour and my love
Thou lay no hand upon him.

Bertuccio. Nay, my lord,
Nay—

Faliero. Swear me this.

Bertuccio. I will not.

Faliero. Swear, I say.

Bertuccio. I cannot swear it, father.

Faliero. By Christ's blood,
But swear thou shalt, and keep it. Do not make
Thy sire indeed mad with more monstrous wrong
Than yet bows down his head dishonoured. Swear.

Bertuccio. What?

Faliero. That albeit his life lay in thine hand
Thou wouldst not bruise it with a finger.

Bertuccio. Sir,
How can I?
Faliero. Sir, by God, thou shalt not choose.
Art thou the hangman?
Bertuccio. If the knave perchance
Be noble?
Faliero. Dost thou mock thyself and me?
Noble?
Bertuccio. My lord, I would not wrong the worst
Of all that wrong the names they wear: but yet
I cannot see in Venice one save one
Who might, being born base, and of no base name,
Conceive himself so far your enemy.
Faliero. Boy,
What knowest thou of their numbers that have cause,
Being vile, to hate me? Hath my rule not been
Righteous?
Bertuccio. That stands not questionable of man.
Faliero. How then should more not hate than love
me? Child,
Child!
Bertuccio. But a man's wrath strikes more straight,
my lord,
How vile soe'er, than toward a woman. This—
This is a dog's tooth that has poisoned you:
And yestereve a dog it was you bade
Spurn out of sight of honour.
Faliero. Steno?

Bertuccio. He.
Else am not I Faliero.
Faliero. Then—I say,
Then,—be it so,—what wouldst thou do? Being my son,
What wouldst thou dream or do, this being so?
Bertuccio. Why,
With God's good will and yours, and good men's leave,
Hew out his heart for dogs to gnaw. Might this
Displease you?
Faliero. Why then yet is this to do?
Bertuccio. Forgive me, father, and God forgive me: this
I am all on fire with shame to have spoken of
And think the man lives while I prate. But you
Know, and our Lord God knows, it is but now,
Now, even this instant breath of imminent time,
That I have guessed this.
Faliero. Ay; we know it well;
We, God and I.
Bertuccio. And both of you give leave—
Or leave I crave of neither—pardon me,
But leave I crave not to set heel on him.
Faliero. God gives not leave; and I forbid thee.
Bertuccio. Then,
In God's teeth and in yours, I will, or God
Shall smite me helpless by your hand. My lord,
You do but justice on me, so to seem—

I would not say, to dwell in doubt of me.
I should have passed ere this out of your sight,
Silent.

Faliero. Thou shouldst not. Is this burden sore
That as thou sayest God lays on thee, or I,
To be as I am patient?

Bertuccio. Fain would I
Be, would God help me, even as you—were you
As I now stand, though shamefaced, in your sight.

Faliero. Ay—you are young and shamefaced—I am old,
And in my heart the shame is. But your face
Hath honour in it—and what have I to do,
What should I do with honour? Thou dost make
Of mine more havoc and less count of me
Than yet mine enemies have, to take this charge
Upon the personal quarrel of thine hand,
Unchartered by commission.

Bertuccio. And of me,
My lord, of me what make you? How shall men
Not spit when I pass by, at one that had
Nor heart nor hand, eye to behold nor ear
To hear the several scoffs, by glance or speech,
That base men cast on us? Nay, then what right
Had I to call any man base that lives
Or any worm that stings in secret? Sir,
Put not this shame upon me: when have I
Deserved it? Why, a beaten dog, a slave

Branded and whipped by justice, durst not bear
For very shame's sake, though he know not shame,
So great dishonour.

Faliero. Thou shalt bear it, son.

Bertuccio. I will not.

Faliero. Son, what will is this of thine
To lift its head up when I bid it lie
And listen while mine own, thy father's will,
Speaks? How shalt thou that wilt not honour me
Take in thine hand mine honour? Mine, not thine,
Not yet, I tell thee, thine it is to say
Thou shalt or shalt not strike or spare the stroke
That is to make my fame, if hurt it be,
Whole. I, not thou, it is that heads the house
And bears the burden: I, not thou, meseems,
It was that fought at Zara. Nay, thine eyes
Answer, an old man then was young, and I
That now am young then was not: nor in sooth
Would I misdoubt or so misprize thee, boy,
As not to think thou hadst done as gladly well
As I that service, had it lain in thee,
Or any toward our country. But myself
Am not so bowed and bruised of ruinous time,
Not yet so beaten down of trampling years,
That I should make my staff or sword of thee,
And strike by delegation. On the state
Is laid the charge of right and might to deal
Justice for all men and myself and thee

By sovereignty of duty; not on us
Lies of that load whereto the law puts hand
One feather's or one grain's weight. More: did we
Take so much on us of the general charge,
We were not loyal: and the dog we strike
Were yet, though viler than a leper's hound,
No viler then than we, who by God's gift
Being born of this the crown of commonweals,
Venetian, so should cast our crown away
That men born subject, unashamed to be
Called of their king subjects, might scoff at us·
As children of no loftier state than theirs.
For where a man's will hangs above men's heads
Sheer as a sword or scourge might, and not one
Save by his grace hath grace to call himself
Man—there, if haply one be born a man,
Needs must he break the dogleash of the law
To do himself, being wronged, where no right is,
Right: but as base as he that should not break,
To show himself no dog, but man, their law,
Were he, that civic thief, the trustless knave
Who should not, being as we born masterless,
Put faith in freedom and the free man's law,
Justice, but like a king's man born, compelled
To cower with hounds or strike with rebels, rise
And right himself by wrong of all men else,
Shaming his country; saying, "I trust thee not;
I dare not leave my cause upon thine hand,

Mine honour in thy keeping lies not sure ;
I must not set the chance of my good name
On such a dicer's cast as this, that thou
Wilt haply, should it like thee, do me right."
No citizen were this man, nor unmeet
By right of birth and civic honour he
To call a man sovereign and lord : nor here
Lives one, I think, so vile a fool as this.
For me, my faith is in the state I serve
And those my fellow-servants, in whose hands
Rests now mine honour safe as theirs in mine.
Which trust should they redeem not, but give up
In mine their own fame forfeit, this were not
Venice.

Bertuccio. But if perchance the thing fall out ?
If some be peradventure less than thou
Venetian, equal-souled and just of eye,
Must our own hands not take our own right up ?
If these abuse their honour, and forbear,
For love's or fear's sake, justice ?

Faliero. If the sun
Leap out of heaven down on the Lido there
And quench him in Giudecca. [*Rises.*

Bertuccio. Sir, but then—

Faliero. I charge thee, speak hereof to me no more.

MARY STUART AT SOLWAY FIRTH.

(FROM THE CHRONICLE HISTORY OF *BOTHWELL* ; ACT V. SCENE XIII.)

Mary, about to embark for England, takes leave of her remaining friends on the shore of Solway Firth.

MAY 16, 1568.

The QUEEN, MARY BEATON, HERRIES, GEORGE DOUGLAS, *Page and Attendants.*

Queen. Is not the tide yet full?
Herries. Come half an hour,
And it will turn; but ere that ebb begin,
Let me once more desire your pardon, though
I plead against your pleasure. Here you stand
Not yet dethroned from royal hope, not yet
Discrowned of your great name, whose natural power
Faith here forgets not, nor man's loyal love
Leaves off to honour; but gone hence, your name
Is but a stranger's, subject to men's laws,
Alien and liable to control and chance
That are the lords of exile, and command
The days and nights of fugitives; your hope

Dies of strange breath or lives between strange lips,
And nor your will nor only God's beside
Is master of your peace of life, but theirs
Who being the lords of land that harbours you
Give your life leave to endure their empire: what
Can man do to you that a rebel may,
Which fear might deem as bad as banishment?
Not death, not bonds are bitterer than his day
On whom the sun looks forth of a strange sky,
Whose thirst drinks water from strange hands, whose lips
Eat stranger's bread for hunger; who lies down
In a strange dark and sleeps not, and the light
Makes his eyes weep for their own morning, seen
On hills that helped to make him man, and fields
Whose flowers grew round his heart's root; day like night
Denies him, and the stars and airs of heaven
Are as their eyes and tongues who know him not.
Go not to banishment; the world is great,
But each has but his own land in the world.
There is one bosom that gives each man milk,
One country like one mother: none sleeps well
Who lies between strange breasts: no lips drink life
That seek it from strange fosters. Go not hence;
You shall find no man's faith or love on earth
Like theirs that here cleave to you.

Queen. I have found
And think to find no hate of men on earth

Like theirs that here beats on me. Hath this earth
Which sent me forth a five-years' child, and queen
Not even of mine own sorrows, to come back
A widowed girl out of the fair warm sun
Into the grave's mouth of a dolorous land
And life like death's own shadow, that began
With three days' darkness—hath this earth of yours
That made mine enemies, at whose iron breast
They drank the milk of treason—this hard nurse,
Whose rocks and storms have reared no violent thing
So monstrous as men's angers, whose wild minds
Were fed from hers and fashioned—this that bears
None but such sons as being my friends are weak,
And strong, being most my foes—hath it such grace
As I should cling to, or such virtue found
In some part of its evil as my heart
Should fear, being free, to part from? Have I lived,
Since I came here in shadow and storm, three days
Out of the storm and shadow? Have I seen
Such rest, such hope, such respite from despair,
As thralls and prisoners in strong darkness may
Before the light look on them? Hath there come
One chance on me of comfort, one poor change,
One possible content that was not born
Of hope to break forth of these bonds, or made
Of trust in foreign fortune? Here, I knew,
Could never faith nor love nor comfort breed
While I sat fast in prison; ye, my friends,

The few men and the true men that were mine,
What were ye but what I was, and what help
Hath each love had of other, yours of mine,
Mine of your faith, but change of fight and flight,
Fear and vain hope and ruin? Let me go,
Who have been but grief and danger to my friends;
It may be I shall come with power again
To give back all their losses, and build up
What for my sake was broken.

Herries. Did I know it,
Yet were I loth to bid you part, and find
What there you go to seek; but knowing it not,
My heart sinks in me and my spirit is sick
To think how this fair foot once parted hence
May rest thus light on Scottish ground no more.

Queen. It shall tread heavier when it steps again
On earth which now rejects it; I shall live
To bruise their heads who wounded me at heel,
When I shall set it on their necks. Come, friends,
I think the fisher's boat hath hoised up sail
That is to bear none but one friend and me:
Here must my true men and their queen take leave,
And each keep thought of other. My fair page,
Before the man's change darken on your chin
I may come back to ride with you at rein
To a more fortunate field: howe'er that be,
Ride you right on with better hap, and live
As true to one of merrier days than mine

As on that night to Mary, once your queen.
Douglas, I have not won a word of you;
What would you do to have me tarry?
George Douglas. Die.
Queen. I lack not love it seems then at my last.
That word was bitter; yet I blame it not,
Who would not have sweet words upon my lips
Nor in mine ears at parting. I should go
And stand not here as on a stage to play
My last part out in Scotland; I have been
Too long a queen too little. By my life,
I know not what should hold me here or turn
My foot back from the boat-side, save the thought
How at Lochleven I last set foot aboard,
And with what hope, and to what end; and now
I pass not out of prison to my friends,
But out of all friends' help to banishment.
Farewell, Lord Herries.
Herries. God go with my queen,
And bring her back with better friends than I.
Queen. Methinks the sand yet cleaving to my foot
Should not with no more words be shaken off,
Nor this my country from my parting eyes
Pass unsaluted; for who knows what year
May see us greet hereafter? Yet take heed,
Ye that have ears, and hear me; and take note,
Ye that have eyes, and see with what last looks
Mine own take leave of Scotland; seven years since

Did I take leave of my fair land of France,
My joyous mother, mother of my joy,
Weeping; and now with many a woe between
And space of seven years' darkness, I depart
From this distempered and unnatural earth
That casts me out unmothered, and go forth
On this grey sterile bitter gleaming sea
With neither tears nor laughter, but a heart
That from the softest temper of its blood
Is turned to fire and iron. If I live,
If God pluck not all hope out of my hand,
If aught of all mine prosper, I that go
Shall come back to men's ruin, as a flame
The wind bears down, that grows against the wind,
And grasps it with great hands, and wins its way,
And wins its will, and triumphs; so shall I
Let loose the fire of all my heart to feed
On these that would have quenched it. I will make
From sea to sea one furnace of the land
Whereon the wind of war shall beat its wings
Till they wax faint with hopeless hope of rest,
And with one rain of men's rebellious blood
Extinguish the red embers. I will leave
No living soul of their blaspheming faith
Who war with monarchs; God shall see me reign
As he shall reign beside me, and his foes
Lie at my foot with mine; kingdoms and kings
Shall from my heart take spirit, and at my soul

Their souls be kindled to devour for prey
The people that would make its prey of them
And leave God's altar stripped of sacrament
As all kings' heads of sovereignty, and make
Bare as their thrones his temples ; I will set
Those old things of his holiness on high
That are brought low, and break beneath my feet
These new things of men's fashion ; I will sit
And see tears flow from eyes that saw me weep
And dust and ashes and the shadow of death
Cast from the block beneath the axe that falls
On heads that saw me humbled ; I will do it,
Or bow mine own down to no royal end
And give my blood for theirs if God's will be,
But come back never as I now go forth
With but the hate of men to track my way
And not the face of any friend alive.

Mary Beaton. But I will never leave you till you die.

MARY STUART AT CHARTLEY.

(FROM THE TRAGEDY OF *MARY STUART*; ACT I. SCENE II.)

Mary, while awaiting the result of Babington's conspiracy against the life of Queen Elizabeth, anticipates at once the promised pleasure of a deer-hunt in Tixall Park and the successful issue of the last design on behalf of her cause.

AUGUST 14, 1586.

MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON.

Mary Stuart. We shall not need keep house for fear to-day;
The skies are fair and hot; the wind sits well
For hound and horn to chime with. I will go.
Mary Beaton. How far from this to Tixall?
Mary Stuart. Nine or ten
Or what miles more I care not; we shall find
Fair field and goodly quarry, or he lies,
The gospeller that bade us to the sport,
Protesting yesternight the shire had none
To shame Sir Walter Aston's. God be praised,

I take such pleasure yet to back my steed
And bear my crossbow for a deer's death well,
I am almost half content—and yet I lie—
To ride no harder nor more dangerous heat
And hunt no beast of game less gallant.
Mary Beaton. Nay,
You grew long since more patient.
Mary Stuart. Ah, God help!
What should I do but learn the word of him
These years and years, the last word learnt but one,
That ever I loved least of all sad words?
The last is death for any soul to learn,
The last save death is patience.
Mary Beaton. Time enough
We have had ere death of life to learn it in
Since you rode last on wilder ways than theirs
That drive the dun deer to his death.
Mary Stuart. Eighteen—
How many more years yet shall God mete out
For thee and me to wait upon their will
And hope or hope not, watch or sleep, and dream
Awake or sleeping? surely fewer, I think,
Than half these years that all have less of life
Than one of those more fleet that flew before.
I am yet some ten years younger than this queen,
Some nine or ten; but if I die this year
And she some score years longer than I think
Be royal-titled, in one year of mine

I shall have lived the longer life, and die
The fuller-fortuned woman.

* * * * * *

Mary Beaton. Have you hope
The chase to-day may serve our further ends
Than to renew your spirit and bid time speed?

Mary Stuart. I see not but I may; the hour is full
Which I was bidden expect of them to bear
More fruit than grows of promise; Babington
Should tarry now not long; from France our friends
Lift up their heads to usward, and await
What comfort may confirm them from our part
Who sent us comfort; Ballard's secret tongue
Has kindled England, striking from men's hearts
As from a flint the fire that slept, and made
Their dark dumb thoughts and dim disfigured hopes
Take form from his and feature, aim and strength,
Speech and desire toward action; all the shires
Wherein the force lies hidden of our faith
Are stirred and set on edge of present deed
And hope more imminent now of help to come
And work to do than ever; not this time
We hang on trust in succour that comes short
By Philip's fault from Austrian John, whose death
Put widow's weeds on mine unwedded hope,
Late trothplight to his enterprise in vain
That was to set me free, but might not seal
The faith it pledged, nor on the hand of hope

Make fast the ring that weds desire with deed
And promise with performance ; Parma stands
More fast now for us in his uncle's stead,
Albeit the lesser warrior, yet in place
More like to avail us, and in happier time
To do like service ; for my cousin of Guise,
His hand and league hold fast our kinsman king,
If not to bend and shape him for our use,
Yet so to govern as he may not thwart
Our forward undertaking till its force
Discharge itself on England : from no side
I see the shade of any fear to fail
As those before so baffled ; heart and hand,
Our hope is armed with trust more strong than steel
And spirit to strike more helpful than a sword
In hands that lack the spirit ; and here to-day
It may be I shall look this hope in the eyes
And see her face transfigured. God is good ;
He will not fail his faith for ever. O,
That I were now in saddle ! Yet an hour,
And I shall be as young again as May
Whose life was come to August ; like this year,
I had grown past midway of my life, and sat
Heartsick of summer ; but new-mounted now
I shall ride right through shine and shade of spring
With heart and habit of a bride, and bear
A brow more bright than fortune. Truth it is,
Those words of bride and May should on my tongue

Sound now not merry, ring no joy-bells out
In ears of hope or memory; not for me
Have they been joyous words; but this fair day
All sounds that ring delight in fortunate ears
And words that make men thankful, even to me
Seem thankworthy for joy they have given me not
And hope which now they should not.

Mary Beaton. Nay, who knows?
The less they have given of joy, the more they may;
And they who have had their happiness before
Have hope not in the future; time o'erpast
And time to be have several ends, nor wear
One forward face and backward.

Mary Stuart. God, I pray,
Turn thy good words to gospel, and make truth
Of their kind presage! but our Scotswomen
Would say, to be so joyous as I am,
Though I had cause, as surely cause I have,
Were no good warrant of good hope for me.
I never took such comfort of my trust
In Norfolk or Northumberland, nor looked
For such good end as now of all my fears
From all devices past of policy
To join my name with my misnatured son's
In handfast pledge with England's, ere my foes
His counsellors had flawed his craven faith
And moved my natural blood to cast me off
Who bore him in my body, to come forth

Less childlike than a changeling. But not long
Shall they find means by him to work their will,
Nor he bear head against me; hope was his
To reign forsooth without my fellowship,
And he that with me would not shall not now
Without or with me wield not or divide
Or part or all of empire.

Mary Beaton. Dear my queen,
Vex not your mood with sudden change of thoughts;
Your mind but now was merrier than the sun
Half rid by this through morning: we by noon
Should blithely mount and meet him.

Mary Stuart. So I said.
My spirit is fallen again from that glad strength
Which even but now arrayed it; yet what cause
Should dull the dancing measure in my blood
For doubt or wrath, I know not. Being once forth,
My heart again will quicken. [*Sings.*

And ye maun braid your yellow hair
And busk ye like a bride;
Wi' sevenscore men to bring ye hame,
And ae true love beside;
Between the birk and the green rowan
Fu' blithely shall ye ride.

O ye maun braid my yellow hair,
But braid it like nae bride;
And I maun gang my ways, mither,
Wi' nae true love beside;
Between the kirk and the kirkyard
Fu' sadly shall I ride.

How long since,
How long since was it last I heard or sang
Such light lost ends of old faint rhyme worn thin
With use of country songsters? When we twain
Were maidens but some twice a span's length high,
Thou hadst the happier memory to hold rhyme,
But not for songs the merrier.

Mary Beaton. This was one
That I would sing after my nurse, I think,
And weep upon in France at six years old
To think of Scotland.

Mary Stuart. Would I weep for that,
Woman or child, I have had now years enough
To weep in; thou wast never French in heart,
Serving the queen of France. Poor queen that was,
Poor boy that played her bridegroom! now they seem
In these mine eyes that were her eyes as far
Beyond the reach and range of oldworld time
As their first fathers' graves.

ADIEUX À MARIE STUART.

I.

Queen, for whose house my fathers fought
With hopes that rose and fell,
Red star of boyhood's fiery thought,
Farewell.

They gave their lives, and I, my queen,
Have given you of my life,
Seeing your brave star burn high between
Men's strife.

The strife that lightened round their spears
Long since fell still: so long
Hardly may hope to last in years
My song.

But still through strife of time and thought
Your light on me too fell:
Queen, in whose name we sang or fought,
Farewell.

II.

There beats no heart on either border
Wherethrough the north blasts blow
But keeps your memory as a warder
His beacon-fire aglow.

Long since it fired with love and wonder
Mine, for whose April age
Blithe midsummer made banquet under
The shade of Hermitage.

Soft sang the burn's blithe notes, that gather
Strength to ring true:
And air and trees and sun and heather
Remembered you.

Old border ghosts of fight or fairy
Or love or teen,
These they forgot, remembering Mary
The Queen.

III.

Queen once of Scots and ever of ours
Whose sires brought forth for you
Their lives to strew your way like flowers,
Adieu.

Dead is full many a dead man's name
Who died for you this long
Time past: shall this too fare the same,
My song?

But surely, though it die or live,
Your face was worth
All that a man may think to give
On earth.

No darkness cast of years between
Can darken you:
Man's love will never bid my queen
Adieu.

IV.

Love hangs like light about your name
As music round the shell:
No heart can take of you a tame
Farewell.

Yet, when your very face was seen,
Ill gifts were yours for giving:
Love gat strange guerdons of my queen
When living.

O diamond heart unflawed and clear,
The whole world's crowning jewel!
Was ever heart so deadly dear
So cruel?

Yet none for you of all that bled
Grudged once one drop that fell:
Not one to life reluctant said
Farewell.

v.

Strange love they have given you, love disloyal,
Who mock with praise your name,
To leave a head so rare and royal
Too low for praise or blame.

You could not love nor hate, they tell us,
You had nor sense nor sting:
In God's name, then, what plague befell us
To fight for such a thing?

"Some faults the gods will give," to fetter
Man's highest intent:
But surely you were something better
Than innocent!

No maid that strays with steps unwary
Through snares unseen,
But one to live and die for; Mary,
The Queen.

VI.

Forgive them all their praise, who blot
Your fame with praise of you:
Then love may say, and falter not,
Adieu.

Yet some you hardly would forgive
Who did you much less wrong
Once: but resentment should not live
Too long.

They never saw your lip's bright bow,
Your swordbright eyes,
The bluest of heavenly things below
The skies.

Clear eyes that love's self finds most like
A swordblade's blue,
A swordblade's ever keen to strike,
Adieu.

VII.

Though all things breathe or sound of fight
That yet make up your spell,
To bid you were to bid the light
Farewell.

Farewell the song says only, being
A star whose race is run:
Farewell the soul says never, seeing
The sun.

Yet, wellnigh as with flash of tears,
The song must say but so
That took your praise up twenty years
Ago.

More bright than stars or moons that vary,
Sun kindling heaven and hell,
Here, after all these years, Queen Mary,
Farewell.

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